

5.0 EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DISPATCH PROCEDURES

The Lackawanna County EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER (ECC) is the designated 9-1-1 Center for dispatching emergency medical services within Lackawanna County, as approved by the Lackawanna County Commissioners.

Today's emergency medical services (EMS) system reflects the vast changes made in emergency medicine in recent years. With the creation of the First Responder, EMT, and Paramedic, citizens now have emergency medical attention available to them as never before.

Presently, there are numerous companies providing various levels of patient care in Lackawanna County. Of these, some provide basic life support (BLS) services and others provide advanced life support (ALS) services. Helicopter evacuation is also provided.

It is the purpose of this Section to outline the procedures needed to provide an effective link between the caller, Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD), emergency responders and hospitals.

5.1 Dispatching Appropriate EMS Services

- 5.1.1 All calls requiring EMS response will be evaluated by the EMD using the Criteria Based Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Guide Cards for medical emergencies and trauma. These EMD guide cards will assist the EMD in determining the appropriate level of EMS response (BLS standard, BLS priority or ALS priority), and form the basis for all EMS dispatching in Lackawanna County. Pre-arrival instructions will be utilized when, and as, indicated by the EMS guide cards. All medical terminology used will be consistent with the guide cards.
- 5.1.2 Having determined the need for EMS response, the EMD will dispatch as follows: BLS, Unit responsible for BLS coverage for the Venue in which the call is located. ALS, the nearest available ALS unit(s) to the incident. Nearest available ALS unit is determined by the ECC based upon detailed Global Positioning System (GPS) data. Nearest Available service designations are established and recommended by the CAD system based upon data provided by the caller and input by the PST.
- 5.1.3 All EMS services and personnel dispatched by the Lackawanna County ECC will be alerted by tone alert pagers followed by a voice message on the designated frequency. The designated frequency for EMS in Lackawanna County is indicated in Appendix E of this manual.

5.2 EMS Dispatch Format

5.2.1 Having determined the appropriate EMS response from the guide cards and appropriate unit(s) from the CAD system, the EMD will depress the appropriate pre-programmed page button(s) for the identified unit(s). EMS unit designations are delineated in Appendix C.

5.2.2 The proper BLS dispatch format is as follows:

Lackawanna County dispatching {unit designation} respond. . .
Indicate type of response, i.e. BLS Standard or Priority
Location of incident with cross streets if indicated
Municipality of the incident
Type of incident
Pertinent details of the incident
Time
Repeat above after brief (1-2 sec.) pause, then prefacing your repeat with, REPEATING and the above dispatch

5.2.3 The proper ALS/BLS dispatch format is as follows:

Lackawanna County dispatching {BLS unit designation}, {ALS unit designation}, respond. . .
Location of incident with cross streets if indicated
Municipality of the incident
Type of incident
Pertinent details of the incident
Time
Repeat above after brief (1-2 sec.) pause, then prefacing your repeat with, REPEATING and the above dispatch

5.2.4 After a BLS call has been dispatched; the Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD) will monitor the call for response. If, after four (4) minutes, a dispatched unit or personnel of the dispatched agency have not acknowledged the dispatch via radio, the EMD will attempt to contact the unit by radio. If there is no verbal response or a full crew has not been assembled, the EMD will then re-page the first due unit along with the first due mutual aid unit as indicated on the Run Card. If, after four (4) additional minutes (total of eight (8) minutes), the dispatched unit(s) is not responding (wheels turning on the dispatched vehicle), the EMD will dispatch the closest available AVL unit as determined by the AVL System. Upon dispatch the EMD will notify the AVL Unit that

they are responding to a BLS call in place of the dispatched BLS Unit and will be required to transport. It will be the responsibility of the AVL unit personnel to request a transport unit if they are not a transport capable AVL unit. If the dispatched BLS unit assembles a crew after the 8 minutes and after the AVL dispatch nothing will prohibit them from responding appropriately to the scene and assisting the AVL Crew. (revised 10/14/04)

- 5.2.5 The procedure identified in Section 5.2.4 will apply to BLS calls only. ALS calls will be dispatched by the same procedure as outlined in Section 5.2.4 with the addition of the ALS AVL unit also being dispatched on the first page. If after the eight minute interval the dispatched BLS unit has not responded, the ALS unit will be notified of same and advised that they should transport if they are capable. The ALS AVL unit will notify the ECC if they are not transport capable (QRS) and request a transport vehicle from the closest service. (revised 10/14/04)

5.3 Proper Radio Procedures

- 5.3.1 All communications referenced in this section shall be done by the responding unit and not by or through a base station or private dispatch or telephone. The proper radio procedure for calling and/or responding to the ECC or a field unit is as follows:

- 5.3.1.1 To call the ECC:

Field Unit: "{Unit number} to Lackawanna"
The ECC will respond: "Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit Number}"

The calling field unit may then transmit the message.

- 5.3.1.2 A field unit will not call the ECC and immediately transmit a message. Wait for the ECC to acknowledge the call, then begin transmitting. Failure to follow this procedure may result in missed messages which could bring dangerous results.

- 5.3.1.2 To call a field unit:

ECC: "Lackawanna County to {Unit number}"
Field Unit: "{Unit Number} Go Ahead Lackawanna"
The ECC may then proceed with their transmission.

5.4 EMS Communications

5.4.1 Acknowledging The Dispatch

5.4.1.1 Once dispatched, personnel from the dispatched unit will confirm receipt of the dispatch by calling the ECC on the appropriate frequency as follows:

Field Unit: {Unit number} to Lackawanna
ECC: Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit number}
Field Unit: {Unit number}, acknowledging the call
at {Location}
ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, {Time}

5.4.2 Responding to the Scene

5.4.2.1 Once dispatched, the responding unit will inform the ECC when it is physically responding (tires rolling), by calling the ECC by radio as follow:

Field Unit: {Unit number} to Lackawanna
ECC: Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit number}
Field Unit: {Unit number} responding to {Location}.
ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, {Time}

- Note: If the Field Unit reports no location or an incorrect location, the ECC will respond as follows:

ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, responding to {Location}, {Time}

5.4.3 On the Scene

5.4.3.1 The responding unit will notify the ECC that it has physically arrived on the scene by calling the ECC by radio as follows:

Field Unit: {Unit number} to Lackawanna
ECC: Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit number}
Field Unit: {Unit number} is on the scene at
{Location}
ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, {Time}

5.4.4 **Enroute to Medical Facility**

5.4.4.1 The responding unit will notify the ECC when it has physically left the scene with a patient enroute to a medical facility by calling the ECC by radio as follows:

Field Unit: {Unit number} to Lackawanna
ECC: Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit number}
Field Unit: {Unit number} enroute to {Medical facility}
from Location
ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, {Time}

5.4.5 The responding unit will notify the ECC when it has physically arrived at the medical facility by calling the ECC by radio as follows:

Field Unit: {Unit number}” to Lackawanna
ECC: Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit number}
Field Unit: {Unit number} arriving at {Medical facility}
from {Location}
ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, {Time}

5.4.6 **Back In Service**

5.4.6.1 The unit will notify the ECC when it has completed its responsibilities at the medical facility and is within its Primary Response Area and available for service by calling the ECC by radio as follows:

Field Unit: {Unit number} to Lackawanna
ECC: Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit number}
Field Unit: {Unit number} is back in service from
{Location}
ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, {Time}

5.4.7 **In Quarters**

5.4.7.1 The unit will notify the ECC when it has physically returned to its station/sub station, by calling the ECC by radio as follows:

Field Unit: {Unit number} to Lackawanna
ECC: Lackawanna, Go Ahead, {Unit number}
Field Unit: {Unit number} is in quarters
ECC: OKAY {Unit number}, {Time}

5.4.8 It is the responsibility of all field units to immediately report any change in their status to the ECC during the process of a call or

otherwise. This would include all the status changes identified in Section 5.4 above, as well as Not Available, Available, Out of Service, In Service, etc. (Refer to Section 4.6). Units need not call in for a special event (i.e. parade, bonfire etc.) if they are remaining in service and available for dispatch.

5.5 EMS Cancellation (Recall)

5.5.1 Once dispatched, a BLS ambulance may only be recalled by a medically certified person (i.e., EMT) physically on the scene of the incident. The only exception to this shall be in the case of no injuries or no patients as so notified by a qualified police, EMS, or fire official on scene. When a BLS ambulance is recalled, the canceling party will provide the ECC with their certification or officer number, which will be recorded in the incident log.

5.5.2 Once dispatched, an ALS unit may only be recalled by a medically certified person aboard the responding BLS ambulance. The only exception to this shall be in the case of no injuries or no patients as so notified by a qualified police, EMS or fire official on scene, and only when both the responding BLS and ALS units are canceled.

5.5.3 While recognizing that patients do have the right to refuse medical treatment and transport, the ECC will not cancel responding EMS units when informed of a patient's refusal. Rather, the responding unit(s) will be so informed and directed to continue on to the scene in order to obtain a signed, informed refusal from the patient(s). Once an EMS unit arrives on the scene and obtains a signed, informed refusal, other responding EMS units may be recalled in accordance with sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2 above.

5.6 Non-Emergency Ambulance Transport

5.6.1 A transport is any ambulance call that is not of an emergency nature, which is scheduled in advance (i.e., transfers to doctor's office from a residence, inter-hospital transfers, etc.). When in doubt, the call will be dispatched as an emergency. For any non-emergency transport that is received, the procedure below shall be followed:

5.6.1.1 After determining that an ambulance request is **not an emergency**, the EMD will dispatch the proper unit responsible for coverage of that area. If the caller is requesting, or has a preference for a specific ambulance service and that service is not dispatched to that area by the ECC, the caller will be instructed of same and provided with the dispatch telephone number of the service of their preference so that they may make direct contact with the service.

- 5.6.1.2 The ECC will page and dispatch the transport as follows:
ECC: Transmit tones
{Unit number}, Respond for a NON-EMERGENCY transport
from {location} to {location}"
- 5.6.1.3 If no response or contact is made from the ambulance service within fifteen (15) minutes of the page, the ECC will contact the calling/requesting party and advise them that a unit is not available for a non-emergency transport.
- 5.6.1.4 Once a representative from the dispatched ambulance service accepts the transport information, the ECC will no longer be responsible for the call. Additionally, the ECC will not page for any additional personnel to handle the call.
- 5.6.1.5 If the paged ambulance service cannot subsequently handle the call, it will be their responsibility to notify the calling/requesting party, or to make arrangements with another service to handle the call. The ECC will not do either of these activities.
- 5.6.1.6 The ECC WILL NOT page for transports pre-arranged by an outside agency.
It will be the agency's responsibility to arrange for a crew.

5.7 Air Ambulance (Helicopter) Response

- 5.7.1 The most likely situations requiring scene transport with a helicopter would involve major trauma with entrapment, major trauma in an area inaccessible to land vehicles or where transport by land will unreasonably extend travel time to a medical facility, or multiple severe trauma victims.
- 5.7.2 Scene response for helicopter transport of patients will only be initiated after request by an authorized and qualified person on scene.
- 5.7.3 Whenever possible, the helicopter should be summoned directly to an accident scene only by a paramedic or EMT if a paramedic is not available.
- 5.7.4 If ALS is unable to arrive at the scene in a timely manner, then the BLS unit should call for authorization/instructions from the Medical Command Facility.

5.7.5 If ALS and BLS are not available, police or fire personnel must assess the situation and determine the need for helicopter scene response

5.7.6 The EMD may initiate a helicopter standby if he/she determines from information received from the caller that a helicopter may be required for transport. The EMD will advise the Shift Supervisor of the Standby. After doing such the EMD will advise the first responding Officer of the dispatched agency of the Helicopter Standby.

5.7.7 When a helicopter transport is requested, the Officer making the request should be prepared to give the helicopter personnel detailed information regarding the following:

1. Who is requesting the response
2. Nature of the incident
3. Number of patients
4. Sex, age, and vital signs of patient(s)
5. Specific injuries and level of consciousness
6. Location of the incident (using landmarks) or latitude and longitude if available
7. Incident Commander or Landing Zone Officer Radio Call Number
8. Call back telephone number and/or radio frequency
9. Any other information that may be helpful to the flight team

5.7.8 When a helicopter has been requested and is enroute, the ECC must be informed by the Incident Commander, of a designated landing zone officer and landing zone for helicopter communications. This very important information must then be relayed to the responding helicopter crew before they arrive in the area.

5.8 EMS Command Officer or Command Post

5.8.1 A Command Officer or Post should be established for all *major* EMS incidents. The Command Officer or Post can be either a piece of apparatus or an individual, so long as the ECC is informed of a radio designation to address all communications. The EMS Command Post should be set up in cooperation with the overall Incident Command Officer. This will enhance the flow of information between the field users and the ECC, as well as promote familiarity in the event of a disaster situation. All requests from the EMS scene to the ECC will come through the EMS Command Officer or Post. Preferably the Command Officer should be referred to as EMS Command “{number of venue or incident location if more than one incident is ongoing}” (i.e. EMS Command 35 Adams Ave)

5.8.2 The first arriving EMS personnel or unit on the scene will advise the ECC that he/she is on scene and in command, and transmit a brief status/condition report. The ECC will then transmit a brief alert tone and notify all additional responding units of the Command Officer or Post designation and initial report.

5.8.3 Depending upon the circumstances, the ECC or Command Officer may request all responding units to utilize an appropriately designated radio frequency. If so requested, the ECC will instruct all units on the call to utilize the designated frequency. The Command Officer must monitor the County Frequency.

5.8.4 All requests for additional services/resources shall come from the Command Officer or Post only. All units must notify the ECC of their status, i.e., responding or on scene, however, all other communications other than unit status, should be directed to the Command Officer or Post not through the ECC to the Command Officer.

5.9 Medical Facility Notification

5.9.1 When an EMS unit requests to communicate with a Medical Facility, the ECC will notify the Hospital in the following manner:

1. Send the hospital the pre-programmed page (or contact by phone if paging not available)
2. Inform the hospital of the requesting/inbound unit as follows: {Hospital name}, pick up for {Unit number} on {Frequency}
3. If the field unit is unable to contact the Medical Facility, the ECC may relay the information. The field unit may also notify the Medical Facility by Cellular Phone if one is available to them, but must notify the ECC that they are doing so.

5.10.2 Med Repeater

5.10.2.1 The Med 1 and Med 5 repeaters are programmed only for providing mobile to base communications and back. They are not to be used for nor are they programmed for mobile to mobile communications.

5.11 Incident Information

- 5.11.1 Cleared Incident information will be provided to EMS units by FAX. Information provided includes: the incident number, the time dispatched, time responded, time on scene, time leaving scene, time at hospital, and time back in service, along with any appropriate narrative or times that may have been provided and entered. The EMS agency should not call the ECC for incident information for record keeping purpose after the call has cleared. This adds an extra burden on the PST and takes them away from emergency duties. They should only advise that all units have cleared the incident and that the report may be faxed.