

Monterey County EMS System Policy



Policy Number: 5000
Effective Date: 7/1/2025
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PATIENT DESTINATION

I. PURPOSE

To provide guidance regarding hospital destination decisions for patients in the prehospital setting.

II. PROCEDURE

- A. **In-Extremis Patients:** Patients who are in-extremis shall be transported to the closest, most accessible emergency department, regardless of hospital advisory status. Trauma patients (Patients meeting Step 1, 2, or 3 criteria under Policy 4040: Field Trauma Triage Criteria) in extremis with a manageable airway shall be transported to the most accessible Level I or Level II Trauma Center.
- B. **Unmanageable Airway:** Patients with an unmanageable airway shall be transported to the closest, most accessible emergency department, regardless of hospital advisory status.
- C. **Trauma Patients:** Patients meeting Step 1, 2, or 3 criteria under Policy 4040: Field Trauma Triage Criteria shall be transported to the closest, most accessible Level I or Level II Trauma Center. A trauma patient with an unmanageable airway may be transported to the closest, most accessible emergency department for airway management.
- D. **Specialty Care Patients:** Patients who meet Monterey County EMS Agency established criteria for specialty care (i.e., Trauma, STEMI, Stroke, ROSC) shall be transported to the closest, most accessible designated hospital that provides that specialty care. If the patient refuses, the medic should make every effort to convince the patient to go to the appropriate specialty care hospital. A patient's refusal to go to a recommended specialty care hospital shall be documented in the PCR.
- E. **Behavioral Health Patients:**
 - 1. Behavioral health patients presenting with acute medical conditions and/or traumatic injury shall be transported to the closest and most appropriate emergency department.
 - 2. Patients who are placed on a 5150 hold by an authorized behavioral health specialist shall be taken to an emergency department (within Monterey County) designated by the behavioral health specialist.
 - 3. Patients who are placed on a 5150 hold by Law Enforcement Officers, without the aid of a behavioral health specialist, should be taken to Natividad or the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula.
- F. **Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT):** Patients who meet Monterey County EMS Agency established criteria for buprenorphine administration from opioid

withdrawal shall be transported to a CA Bridge site or designated overdose receiving facility.

All 7 Tri-County-based hospitals are CA Bridge Sites and appropriate destinations for transport: Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula; Watsonville Community Hospital; Dominican Hospital; Mee Memorial; Natividad; Salinas Valley Health; and Hazel Hawkins Hospital.

- G. **Patient Preference:** All other patients requiring transport should be transported to the emergency department of the patient's preference, unless honoring that request poses an unreasonable or impractical burden on EMS resources.
- H. **No Stated Preference:** Patients with no stated preference should, in most cases, be transported to the most accessible emergency department.

III. OUT-OF-COUNTY EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

Patients may be transported to an out-of-county emergency department if that hospital is accessible and open for ambulance traffic. Base Hospital Contact shall be made with Natividad prior to transporting Adult Major Trauma patients out of county. Paramedic Field Supervisor approval is required for destinations further than adjacent counties.

- A. Contact shall be made with EMS Dispatch to determine whether an out-of-county hospital is on diversion. EMS Dispatch will use ReddiNet to determine the status of the out-of-county hospital.
- B. Transport may continue to the out-of-county emergency department if it is able to accept the patient.
- C. If the out-of-county hospital is not able to accept the patient, the patient shall be transported to the most accessible County of Monterey emergency department or appropriate specialty center.
- D. Medical control will remain with a County of Monterey designated Base Hospital.

IV. NOTES

- A. Consider utilizing more than one hospital when there are multiple patients to avoid overloading any single hospital. Follow patient distribution principles found in the MCI Plan in a declared MCI.
 - 1. Make every attempt to transport family members to the same trauma center, if possible.
- B. In the City of Salinas, patients located north of Market St. will be considered closer to Natividad. Patients located south of Market St. will be considered closer to Salinas Valley Health.
- C. For scene calls, patients who have a valid DNR order who expire during transport shall be transported to the destination hospital. If a patient with a DNR expires during a transfer, the patient should be taken to the receiving hospital or returned to the sending hospital, whichever is closer. This decision may be based on paramedic judgement or family wishes if they are present.

END OF POLICY