



**Department of Public Health
Emergency Medical Services Agency**

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This policy supersedes any other existing policy on this subject.

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- Subject:** **RESPONSE TO KNOWN OR SUSPECTED HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENTS**
- Authority:** Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1798.6 and 1797.220
- Purpose:** The purpose of this policy shall be to establish the standards for ambulance operations when responding to known or suspected hazardous materials (HazMat) incidents, and the procedures to follow if the ambulance crew becomes aware of an exposure after arriving on scene and coming into contact with an exposed patient.
- Policy:** EMS personnel responding to known or suspected HazMat incidents, or those events in which the EMS crew learns of a possible HazMat exposure after coming in contact with a suspected exposed patient, shall follow the procedures and guidelines contained herein.
- Procedure:** 1. Dispatch
- Units dispatched to a possible hazardous materials incident will be advised by dispatch (in addition to the usual information) of the following, when available:
- A. The purpose of the response;
 - 1) Providing support for the hazardous materials response team or fire units
 - 2) Treating and transporting exposed (not contaminated) victims
 - 3) Establishing a requested Medical Branch or Group for a large incident.
 - B. A confirmation that a hazardous materials incident response has been activated.
 - C. Type of hazmat event; i.e. train derailment, big-rig incident, chemical plant fire.
 - D. Type, category, and name of hazardous material(s) involved (if known) (Specific safety considerations for each type of hazardous materials are listed in the North American Emergency Response Guidebook for Hazardous Material incidents (DOT P. 5800.3)).
 - E. On scene wind direction and recommended approach route - responding unit(s) should coordinate with Incident Commander.

APPROVED:

ON FILE

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- F. Estimated number of patients.
- G. Provide location of Incident Commander Post and agency identification of the Incident Commander, if available.
- H. EMS Staging Area location.

2. Recognition of a Hazardous Material ((On-Scene (EMS) or During Transport)):

EMS personnel may become aware of a hazardous material while on scene. If such a situation occurs, EMS personnel will take the following measures:

- A. EMS personnel should consider themselves potentially contaminated;
- B. Evacuate to a safe location (minimize exposure to self and others);
- C. Notify EMS Dispatch and advise them of the potential contamination;
- D. EMS personnel will then request fire department response to the scene for site control and potential emergency decontamination. EMS personnel will follow the direction of the fire department once they arrive.
- E. The scene will be managed as a hazardous materials site using principles of the Incident Command System (ICS).

3. Patient Care

- A. EMS personnel shall not attempt to enter any HazMat scene or render medical aid beyond the support zone. Medical treatment and transportation is secondary to the possibility of spreading the contaminate, and the management of the HazMat incident. Management of the hazardous material and the prevention of further exposure take precedence over patient care. EMS personnel may be requested to receive non-ambulatory patients from the Contamination Reduction Zone after decontamination has been completed.
- B. The hazardous materials response team (fire department) may initiate patient care within the inner perimeter of the exposure area(s). EMS personnel may only provide and/or initiate patient care after the patient has been transferred to them in the designated area (support zone) after decontamination considerations have been addressed.

4. Patient Transportation

- A. Deceased victims shall be left undisturbed at the scene.
- B. Transport of contaminated patients is prohibited. Patients that have been decontaminated should be considered "exposed" and treated accordingly. The type of transport- (air ambulance, ground ambulance, mass transportation, POV) should take into account the type of exposure and the

- potential for secondarily exposing health care providers or private citizens. The hazardous materials response personnel should be consulted regarding the potential for secondary exposure of medical care personnel.
- C. Transport crews shall notify both the Base Hospital and Receiving Hospital of the patient's exposure and that the patient has received decontamination prior to transport (if decontamination was necessary).
- D. If, during patient transport, personnel become aware of information that the patient is a victim of hazardous material exposure or contamination, they shall immediately notify EMS Dispatch. EMS Dispatch shall notify the Fire Department of jurisdiction and request their response for evaluation. The transport unit shall immediately discontinue the transport and find the nearest safe and appropriate location to stop and evacuate themselves and the patient from the ambulance. The crew shall then do the following:
- 1) don personal protection equipment, as appropriate and available;
 - 2) prepare for emergency decontamination;
 - 3) provide supportive care for the patient, as necessary
 - 4) The patient is not to be moved into the hospital until cleared by appropriate fire or HazMat personnel.
5. After the patient is transferred, the emergency crew must leave all equipment, trash, contaminated clothing, etc., in the ambulance and lock its doors. Personnel shall not leave the area, eat or drink and should consider self-decontamination (if decontamination has not already occurred). The ambulance will remain out of service until it has been evaluated for contamination and cleared by the Health Department, Division of Environmental Health.