

CRIME SCENE MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for prehospital care personnel when patient assessment, treatment and/or transport is required at the scene of a crime.

It is clearly understood that the first and foremost duty of all personnel (law enforcement and prehospital care) is to protect and preserve human life. Prehospital care personnel must ensure that patient care is given highest priority. In addition, and to the extent possible, this care should be given with consideration to the needs of law enforcement with respect to personnel safety, crime scene management and preservation of evidence.

AUTHORITY

California Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Sections 1798.6, 1797.220. California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 9

POLICY

Prehospital care personnel shall follow the directions of law enforcement with respect to crime scene management. This direction should not prevent nor detract from quality patient care. The following guidelines should be followed:

- A. Parking of EMS vehicles should be done in such a way as to provide access for EMS personnel but with consideration for the crime scene; i.e., do not run over expended shell casings or destroy physical evidence such as tire tracks, foot prints and/or broken glass.
- B. Entry to the crime scene should be made by the minimum number of EMS personnel necessary to access and provide care to patient(s).
- C. Entry and exit to the crime scene should be accomplished by the same route, if possible.
- D. Care should be taken not to disturb any physical evidence. Physical evidence can be as small as a single hair.
- E. Removal of the patient's clothing should be kept to a minimum. Clothing removal should be done in a manner which will minimize the loss of physical evidence; i.e., do not cut clothing through bullet or knife holes.
- F. Clothing and all other personal articles of the patient are to be left in the possession of law enforcement personnel. Do not discard anything.
- G. Put wrappers and other disposable "trash," which accumulates as patient care is rendered, in a single site away from the patient and/or potential crime scene evidence. Do not pick up on-scene trash items and discard because evidence may be destroyed. On-scene law enforcement personnel may suggest a site to be used for trash which would be most ideal to maximize preservation of evidence.

- H. Patients who meet the "obvious death" criteria, as stated in YEMSA Policy, "Determination of Death," do not require EKG confirmation of asystole. These include:
1. Decapitation.
 2. Total incineration of torso and/or head.
 3. Decomposition.
 4. Total separation of vital organs from the body or total destruction of these organs accompanied by no detectable pulse or respiration. Note: A single person can check for pulse and respiration.
 5. Rigor Mortis.
- I. Patients who meet the "probable death" criteria, as stated in YEMSA Policy, "Determination of Death," should be assessed utilizing the minimum number of EMS personnel.
- J. It is important that prehospital care personnel understand that law enforcement personnel have the authority to declare death. If this has occurred, the responsibility for the declaration of death is law enforcement's. If death has been declared by a law enforcement officer, medical confirmation procedures do not need to be performed by prehospital care personnel.
- K. Every effort to cooperate with law enforcement should be made. In the event of disagreement with law enforcement, EMS personnel should document the problem and refer the matter to their superior for follow-up and/or action. If the disagreement involves, in the opinion of prehospital care personnel, an issue that will or could result in patient harm, an immediate request for on-scene supervisory personnel will be made.
- L. In the event that EMS personnel discover a crime scene, or are at a crime scene without law enforcement, an immediate request for law enforcement shall be made. Until such time as law enforcement arrives, EMS personnel shall assure their own safety and, if possible, attempt to follow the guidelines contained in this policy.

CROSS REFERENCES

Policy and Procedure Manual

Base Hospital Contact

Determination of Death - Public Safety, EMT, Advanced EMT & Paramedic Personnel

Cardiac Resuscitation Care