

## Preface:

In the interest of optimizing out-of-hospital care, establishing a standard procedure for EMS response in Suffolk County and providing continuous improvement to regional ambulance response the following Dispatch, Crew Confirmation and Mutual Aid Protocol has been established [i] :

This protocol does not apply to scheduled, interfacility transports or contractual response by non-911 responding services. [i]

## **Emergency Medical Services Dispatch, Crew Confirmation and Mutual Aid Protocol**

1. All Emergency Medical Services agencies operating in Suffolk County will utilize Emergency Medical Dispatch and certified Emergency Medical Dispatchers.
2. **Advanced Life Support (ALS)** shall be requested at alarm activation for **Charlie, Delta and Echo calls** from either intra-agency or interagency mutual aid agreements.
3. All agencies shall establish and participate in a **Crew Confirmation System**.
4. For all **Alpha, Bravo and Charlie** calls:
  - A. Crew shall notify dispatch that they are in or en route to quarters within two (2) minutes.
  - B. If a complete crew cannot be identified within **two (2) minutes** from initial dispatch, a call for additional personnel (signal 3) shall be initiated.
  - C. If a complete crew cannot be identified at **four (4) minutes** from time of initial dispatch, a request for **Mutual Aid** (signal 24) shall be initiated by the dispatch agency. All agencies should establish procedures identifying means for continual alarm notification after mutual aid has been requested. The primary agency shall continue to attempt to muster a crew as per agency procedures until dispatch notifies the agency that the ambulance has arrived on scene.
5. For all **Delta and Echo** calls:
  - A. Crew shall notify dispatch that they are in or en route to quarters within two (2) minutes.
  - B. If a complete crew cannot be identified at two (2) minutes, a request for mutual aid (signal 24) shall be initiated. All agencies should

establish procedures identifying means for continual alarm notification after mutual aid has been requested. The primary agency shall continue to attempt to muster a crew as per agency procedures until dispatch notifies the agency that the ambulance has arrived on scene.

6. The first arriving **Emergency Medical Technician** on scene may extend or shorten the time to request mutual aid as medically appropriate or as scene conditions dictate.

### **Glossary:**

**Emergency dispatched ambulances and first responders:** EMS resources dispatched by the 911 system or in house dispatcher to the scene of a call for emergency medical help.

**Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD):** “A medically approved system used by a medical dispatch center to dispatch appropriate aid to medical emergencies”. (NAEMSP) The system includes systematized caller interrogation questions, systematized pre-arrival instructions, and protocols that match the dispatcher’s evaluation of the illness or injury type and severity with vehicle response mode and configuration. (Clawson) The EMD system in use in Suffolk County is Clawson’s Medical Priority Dispatch, with priority categories Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta and Echo. EMD should be consistent throughout the County.

Plain Language - May be used when conveying to corps information consistent with, but not limited to, Emergency Medical Dispatch determinant code. It must specify nature of call, level of care, time to mutual aid and response mode.

Advanced Life Support request at alarm activation: A request for Advanced Life Support (ALS) shall be initiated when the call is identified to be Charlie, Delta or Echo priority, and thus likely to require Advanced Life Support intervention. **Under no circumstances shall Basic Life Support responders or ambulances delay responding to the scene or the hospital to wait for ALS.**

**Crew confirmation system:** A crew confirmation may consist of notification of dispatch of in house crew per designated shift, or a call in system in which responders indicate their intent to respond to the call.

**Complete crew:** A complete crew to roll an ambulance is agency specific. At a minimum, a driver and EMT are required by State law.

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Question 1** - Why did Suffolk REMAC and REMSCO establish this protocol?

**Answer 1** - The protocol was established to encourage coordination of resources as we strive to improve response times. An analysis of EMS calls revealed that the most extended response times are for those calls for which the initial agency dispatched is unable to respond. This protocol is intended to encourage the establishment of a mechanism to quickly verify that a confirmed crew is

intending to respond to the call. If an appropriate crew cannot be confirmed, mutual aid from a neighboring agency is quickly requested while the original corps continues to attempt to muster personnel as well.

**Question 2** - Does this protocol require that an appropriately staffed ambulance be on a signal 2 within 2 minutes of all Delta and Echo calls and within 4 minutes of all Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie calls?

**Answer 2** - No. This protocol requires that, in the case of Delta and Echo calls, if a responding crew (responding to the ambulance) cannot be confirmed in 2 minutes, the call must be mutual aided. This means that if an EMT and a driver (or the agency definition of an ambulance crew) have committed their intent to respond (as confirmed by phone-in, radio, in-house status, or other confirmation system established by the agency) within 2 minutes, the agency need not mutual aid the call.

In the case of an Alpha, Bravo, or Charlie call, failure to confirm a crew (as above) within 2 minutes requires the agency to broadcast a signal 3 for more personnel. If after 2 more minutes a complete crew cannot be confirmed as responding, the agency must request mutual aid.

In both examples above when the agency has requested mutual aid, the original agency should continue its efforts to muster an appropriate crew of its own until it is confirmed that an appropriately staffed ambulance is on scene.

**Question 3** - What does crew confirmation mean?

**Answer 3** - This means any mechanism by which the agency (dispatcher) can confirm that an appropriate crew is intending to handle the call. This can be a call indicating an in house crew to dispatch, providers calling the dispatch agency by cell phone, providers contacting a crew chief by radio who will then notify dispatch, or any other confirmation system that will allow the agency's dispatcher to be aware that a crew for the call is confirmed.

**Question 4** - What help is available to facilitate implementation of this Protocol?

**Answer 4** - REMSCO and the EMS Division are available to facilitate coordination of efforts.

**Question 5** - How do we get help?

**Answer 5** - Direct your concerns to either the Chair of REMSCO or the System Medical Director. You may also attend REMSCO and REMAC meetings to be involved in the process.

**Question 6** - Do we have to use Red Lights and Sirens for all responses?

**Answer 6** - No. Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMS) does not assign response mode (hot or cold) based on dispatch levels (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, or Echo). This decision is determined at the agency level in conjunction with your medical director.

**Question 7** - How do we know when we can terminate attempts to muster a crew?

**Answer 7** - The agency sending an ambulance shall, through their dispatcher, notify the EMS or fire district that was originally dispatched that an ambulance has arrive on scene.