



## ROWAN COUNTY EMS

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## STANDARD PROCEDURE

### MEDICAL LEGAL ISSUES

- Law enforcement should be notified through ROWAN Communications on all deaths outside a health care facility. An investigation and report must be completed for all suspicious deaths. Some departments may elect not to investigate deaths from natural causes.
- In unincorporated areas of the county the Sheriff's Department will respond. In towns the city police will respond. State Highway Patrol has jurisdiction on all motor vehicle deaths outside incorporated areas.
- At death scenes where a crime is suspected, EMS should try not to disrupt the crime scene. Stay back and await law enforcement.
- Prior to anyone moving the body, arrangements must be made for a physician to sign the death certificate. In cases of natural death the private physician should be contacted. The physician will authorize transport to a funeral home or morgue.
- All other deaths are handled by the Medical Examiner on call. Requests for the ME normally go through law enforcement. Again permission must be obtained to move the body.
- In motor vehicle deaths Dr. Gary Fink, Medical Examiner has given permission for EMS to move the accident victim to reestablish a safe traffic flow or for the safety of workers on the scene. This arrangement has been discussed and has the approval of the State Highway Patrol.
- It is preferable for EMS to take instructions directly from the ME. In other circumstances the law enforcement officer may pass on the ME's instructions. When this happens, log the officer's name in your report.
- If approached by someone stating they are a physician, ask for proof of their credentials. Dentists, chiropractors, osteopaths and veterinarians are not considered medical doctors at the scene of an accident.
- Should the on scene physician wish to assume patient care, put him or her in radio contact with medical control at the sponsor hospital. Then follow the course of treatment as directed.

## MEDICAL LEGAL ISSUES (continued)

- Note the physician's name in the record. If orders are given, have the physician sign for them on the ACR.
- EMS should follow the directions of the attending physician who has an established physician/ patient relationship. As long as the physician is present follow his orders to the limits of your certification, otherwise follow standing orders or call medical control.
- Once a patient care relationship is established, EMS is responsible to turn the patient over to another EMT or health care provider able to continue care.
- Conscious, alert patients have the right to consent or to decline treatment and transportation.
- Patients who are not competent do not have the option of refusing treatment or transportation.
- In determining competency, consider the chief complaint, immediate history, possibility for substance abuse, past medical history, level of consciousness, vital signs and your physical assessment.
- If the patient's condition could be potentially worsened by any delay in care, transport the patient.
- Patients unable to make rational decisions can be transported under the doctrine of *"Implied Consent"*.
- If the crew recommendation is not to transport, confirm the decision with the supervisor.
- Be courteous in explaining the decision not to transport to the patient, family and /or other health care professionals.
- Be sure your documentation is complete. All factors leading to the decision to decline service must be fully explained.