



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Emergency Medical Services Agency

POLICY #302.00

TITLE: **ALS/BLS TIERED DISPATCH AND AMBULANCE RESPONSE (Priority System)**

APPROVED: ON-FILE

EMS Administration: James Clark, EMS Administrator

ON-FILE

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Authority: California Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1797.200 - 226

Purpose: To establish standards and guidelines for Merced County Emergency Medical Services utilizing Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) standards to dispatch ambulances in a tiered manner.

Definitions: **Priority One** – Shall mean lights and siren immediate response for a presumed life-threatening condition. This prompts the response of the closest advanced life support ambulance unit and the closest non-transport first responder unit in order to provide the most rapid response of personnel who can provide immediate basic life support in the form of airway management, CPR, bleeding control, and, if available, defibrillation.

Priority Two – Shall mean lights and siren immediate response for a presumed life-threatening condition. This priority prompts the immediate response of the closest advanced life support ambulance unit. In an urban setting with rapid ambulance response times, the response of a non-transport first responder unit may not be necessary as the need for immediate basic life support intervention is limited. However, in rural, remote, or wilderness areas where the ambulance response is prolonged, the response of a non-transport first responder unit is appropriate to provide supportive basic life support until the arrival of the ambulance.

Priority Three – Shall mean non-lights and siren urgent response for a presumed non-life-threatening, but urgent condition. This priority prompts the immediate response of the closest advanced life support or basic life support ambulance unit (if available) for reasons other than an immediate threat to life or limb. The EMS Agency has identified and approved specific priority 3 incidents that allow a basic life support (BLS) ambulance to be the primary ambulance response.

Priority Four - This is an Interfacility Transfer which could be performed by a BLS or ALS ambulance depending on the patient's medical needs. Refer to EMS Policy 520.00 - EMT and Paramedic Interfacility Transfer.

ALS/BLS Tiered Dispatch and Ambulance Response - Means the dispatch of an Advanced Life Support (ALS) or Basic Life Support (BLS) response to emergency or non-emergency requests for prehospital emergency medical care. Merced County EMS Agency allows the primary response to be a BLS ambulance. Responses are dispatched as defined by the determinate codes

If the request is schedulable, it may be considered for a scheduled Priority 4 request. If the destination for a prehospital incident is the emergency department or acute treatment area of an acute care facility, then the ambulance response should be no less than a Priority 3. If the destination is a diagnostic or scheduled treatment area of an acute care facility, evaluate the call for scheduled priority request.

Advanced Life Support Ambulance - An emergency ambulance staffed with a minimum of one (1) Paramedic and one (1) Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

Basic Life Support Ambulance - An emergency ambulance staffed with a minimum of two (2) Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).

Policy: It is the policy of the Merced County Emergency Medical Services Agency that designated Emergency Medical Services Dispatch Centers shall dispatch and respond Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support ambulance units utilizing the Priority Response System.

All ambulance responses will be determined by the use of the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) Protocols and respond based on the Determinate Codes approved by the Merced County EMS Medical Director.

Procedure: Emergency Medical Services Dispatch Center shall ensure that each request for ambulance service is managed in a manner consistent with established EMS Policies and Procedures, International Academy of Emergency Dispatch (IAED) Standards and Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) Protocols.

Priority response for an Ambulance will be determined by the Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) Protocols which is done by interrogation and completion of Case Entry and Key Questions.