



City and County of San Francisco
London Breed, Mayor

Department of Public Health
Emergency Medical Services Agency

Date: June 26, 2020

To: San Francisco EMS Providers
DEM Division of Emergency Communications
San Francisco Receiving Hospitals

From: John Brown MD, MHOAC & San Francisco EMS System Medical Director
Jim Duren, EMS Administrator

Subject: **COVID-19 Testing of Decedents in the Field**

The Health Officer of the City and County of San Francisco has issued a Health Order (No. C19-14) requiring that all decedents be tested for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This order went into effect on June 25, 2020 and will remain active indefinitely.

To facilitate testing of patients who are pronounced deceased in the field by EMS providers, a Decedent Testing Unit (DTU) program has been established and will operate within a larger workflow that includes the Office of the Medical Examiner (OME) and local skilled nursing facilities. It is imperative that EMS providers become familiar with this workflow and the necessary reporting elements to meet the objectives of the Health Order.

The DTU's will be contracted BLS ambulances currently assigned to the EMS Agency for COVID-19 transport and field testing. When these units are requested (based on conditions detailed below), they will respond to the scene of an EMS incident to obtain a sample from the decedent. EMS is encouraged to remain on scene with the patient if possible until the DTU arrives to reduce impact on family on bystanders. However, EMS is permitted to return to service if operationally necessary.

Operational Workflow for EMS

Upon pronouncement of death in the field, EMS providers will contact the OME per standard protocol. Sample collection will be carried out based on the following conditions.

- If the decedent is located in a Skilled Nursing Facility or hospital, EMS will provide the CAD number to facility staff who will perform the sample collection.
- If the decedent is not located in a Skilled Nursing Facility or hospital (i.e. residence or street):
 - If the OME is responding to the scene to take custody of the decedent, EMS will report the CAD number to the OME who will perform the sample collection.
 - If the OME is not responding to take custody of the decedent:
 - If the time is between 07:00 – 21:00, EMS will contact the DTU at **415-487-2046** for field testing. Provide the patient name, DOB, address, and CAD number.
 - If the time is not between 07:00 – 21:00, EMS may depart the scene and the funeral establishment taking custody of the decedent will be responsible for obtaining sample collection.

San Francisco EMS Agency
90 Van Ness Avenue • San Francisco, CA 94102-6027
Phone (415) 487-5000 • www.sfdph.org

COVID-19 DECEDENT TESTING WORKFLOW FOR EMS PROVIDERS

If the EMS provider has a high index of suspicion the decedent is positive for COVID-19, please include the following in your report to the ME:

- Fever in the past 72 hours
- Recent flu symptoms
- Recent diagnosis of pneumonia

Note

