



Standard Practice for Emergency Medical Dispatch Management¹

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INTRODUCTION

The emergency medical dispatcher (EMD) is the principal link between the public caller requesting emergency medical assistance and the emergency medical service (EMS) resource delivery system. As such, the EMD plays a fundamental role in the ability of the EMS system to respond to a perceived medical emergency. With proper training, program administration, supervision, and medical direction, the EMD can accurately query the caller, select an appropriate method of response, provide pertinent information to responders and give appropriate aid and direction for patients through the caller. Through careful application and reference to a written, medically approved, emergency medical dispatch protocol, sound decisions concerning EMS responses can be made in a safe, reproducible, and non-arbitrary manner. These benefits are realized by EMS systems when appropriate implementation, sound medical management and quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI) at dispatch are provided within the EMD/EMS system. This practice assists in establishing these management and administrative standards.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the function of the emergency medical dispatcher (EMD). This function is the prompt and accurate processing of calls for emergency medical assistance. The training and practice through the use of a written or automated medical dispatch protocol is not sufficient in itself to ensure continued medically correct functioning of the EMD. Their dispatch-specific medical training and focal role in EMS has developed to such a complexity that only through a correctly structured and appropriately managed quality assurance environment can the benefits of their practice be fully realized. The philosophies of emergency medical dispatch have established new duties to which the emergency medical dispatch agency must respond. It is important that their quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI) activities, including initial hiring, orientation, training and certification, continuing dispatch education, recertification, and performance evaluation be given appropriate managerial attention to help ensure the ongoing safety in the performance of the EMD. This practice establishes functional guidelines for these managerial, administrative and supervisory functions.

1.2 The scope of this practice includes:

1.2.1 The entry level selection criteria for hiring emergency medical dispatchers;

1.2.2 The orientation of new emergency medical dispatchers;

1.2.3 Development of QA/QI mechanisms, management strategies and organizational structures for use within a comprehensive emergency medical dispatch system;

1.2.4 Performance evaluation as a component of a comprehensive and ongoing quality assurance and risk management program for an emergency medical dispatch system;

1.2.5 Development and provision of continuing dispatch education activities for the emergency medical dispatcher;

1.2.6 Requirements for initial certification and recertification of the emergency medical dispatcher;

1.2.7 Provision for comparative analysis between different EMD program approaches available to the EMS community that conform to established EMD practice standards prior to implementation of an emergency medical dispatch program; and

1.2.8 Guidelines for implementation of an emergency medical dispatch program.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F30 on Emergency Medical Services and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F30.04 on Communications.

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