DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

SUBJECT: **DISPATCHING OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES** REFERENCE NO. 227

PURPOSE: To establish minimum requirements for the dispatching of emergency medical services.

AUTHORITY: California Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1797.220

State of California Health and Human Services Agency, Emergency Services Authority, Dispatch Program Guidelines, March 2003

DEFINITIONS:

Continuing Dispatch Education: Development and implementation of educational experiences designed to enhance knowledge and skill in the application of dispatch.

Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD): A system of telecommunications established to enable the general public to request emergency assistance or service that provides medically approved pre-arrival instructions, and which dispatches a level of response according to pre-established provider guidelines through caller interrogation by a specially trained dispatcher.

Emergency Medical Dispatcher: An employee of an agency providing emergency medical dispatch services who has completed a nationally recognized dispatch program or Provider Agency specific program that has been approved by the EMS Agency. An Emergency Medical Dispatcher is specially trained to provide post-dispatch/pre-arrival instructions.

Dispatch Center Medical Director: A physician licensed in California, board certified or qualified in emergency medicine, who possesses knowledge of emergency medical systems in California and the local jurisdiction and who is familiar with dispatching systems and methodologies; or the physician responsible for the dispatch medical direction of the nationally–recognized EMD program.

Post-dispatch/Pre-arrival instructions: Telephone rendered, medically approved protocols, including instructions intended to encourage callers to provide simple lifesaving maneuvers to be used after EMS units have been dispatched and prior to their arrival.

Quality Improvement: A program designed to monitor performance and compliance with policies and procedures to ensure safe, efficient, and effective performance of emergency medical dispatching.

PRINCIPLE:

1. All callers requesting emergency medical care should have direct access to qualified dispatch personnel for the provision of emergency medical services.

APPROVED: Director, EMS Agency Medical Director

2. EMS Provider Agencies that implement Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) should comply with the State of California Health and Human Services Agency, Emergency Services Authority, Dispatch Program Guidelines of March 2003.

3. EMS Provider Agencies that do not currently utilize EMD are highly encouraged to incorporate post-dispatch/pre-arrival instructions in their practice of dispatching emergency medical services. These providers should comply with the minimum requirements established in Ref. No. 227, Dispatching of Emergency Medical Services or send the highest level of care available.

POLICY

I. Program Requirements

A. If the dispatch center utilizes a nationally–recognized EMD program, the following shall be submitted to the EMS Agency:

1. Name of system

2. Templates for standardized reports for Quality Improvement

3. Name of Dispatch Center Medical Director

B. If the dispatch center develops its own emergency medical dispatching protocols, the following shall be submitted to the EMS Agency:

1. Education standards and qualifications for call-takers and dispatchers

2. Pre-determined interrogation questions

3. Guidelines and procedures that assist with decision making

4. Post-dispatch/Pre-arrival and instructions when appropriate

5. Templates for standardized reports for Quality Improvement

6. Name of Dispatch Center Medical Director

NOTE: The emergency medical dispatching protocols developed by the dispatch center shall be approved by the Dispatch Center Medical Director.

II. The EMS Agency Medical Director may meet with the Dispatch Center Medical Director to discuss compliance with State and local regulation guidelines.

III. Dispatch Center Medical Director

A. Provides medical oversight of the emergency medical dispatch program by review and approval of:

1. Policies and procedures related to Emergency Medical Dispatch.

2. Standards for qualifying education and continuing education.

3. Dispatch guidelines.

B. Oversees quality improvement and compliance standards.

IV. Emergency Medical Dispatcher Qualifications

A. Initial Qualifications

1. Valid Basic Cardiac Life Support Certification.

2. EMD Certification, or a minimum initial training of twenty-four (24) hours that meets the requirements of the California EMS Authority's Emergency Medical Services Dispatch Program Guidelines.

C. Recertification

1. Recertification as an EMD, if applicable.

2. A minimum of 24 hours of continuing dispatch education every two years.

V. Emergency Medical Dispatch Center policy and procedures will ensure:

A. Staffing on a continuous 24-hour basis of qualified Emergency Medical Dispatchers that meets the provider agency's needs.

B. A dispatch supervisor or designee is readily accessible.

VI. The Emergency Medical Dispatch Center shall have a Quality Improvement Program that will evaluate indicators specific to the dispatch of emergency medical services in order to foster continuous improvement in performance and quality patient care.

CROSS REFERENCES:

Pre-hospital Care Policy Manual:
Reference No. 226, **Private Ambulance Provider Non 9-1-1 Medical Dispatch**
Reference No: 620, **EMS Quality Improvement Program**
Reference No: 620.1, **EMS Quality Improvement Program Guidelines**