County of Luzerne

Advanced Life Support / Basic Life Support

EMS System Response Plan

July 2016

County of Luzerne
9-1-1 Communications Center

Advanced Life Support / Basic Life Support
Countywide Response Plan

Objective

Luzerne County, Pennsylvania (PA) has enacted an EMS Response Plan which covers all Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS) units who participate under the auspices of Luzerne County 9-1-1 (may be referred to herein this document as simply "9-1-1," "Communications Center" or "9-1-1 Center") as well as supporting apparatus (Quick Response Services or "QRS".) All agencies are expected to be available for response to all 9-1-1 initiated calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. When an agency is not available, this response plan will be utilized to identify and execute an expedited response by all assets available to Luzerne County 9-1-1 and response for emergency pre-hospital care services within Luzerne County, PA.

Ideals and Vision

When Luzerne County 9-1-1 receives a request for a response requiring ALS and/or BLS, 9-1-1 will send the appropriate units designated by the municipality as their primary responders. Municipalities are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of their residents. All EMS agencies that participate with Luzerne County's 9-1-1 system will notify the 9-1-1 Center of their availability if their unit is not a 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week paid or staffed unit within their agency. If a unit has notified 9-1-1 that it is Unavailable for Dispatch (UAD), it will be marked appropriately in the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and will be bypassed for the next available unit. All decisions on responses are pre-built into the CAD system for all municipalities and territories.

Goal

The goal of the countywide response plan is to expedite responses by eliminating the delay of any agency that has low staffing and who will not be able to crew when being requested by the center for response to a 9-1-1 initiated call received through the Luzerne County Communications Center.

Process

EMS Agency Responsibility

PA Department of Health licensed EMS agencies are required by the PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009 to provide 24 hour, 7 days a week, 365 days a year coverage for response to all requests for ALS or BLS. If an EMS agency is unable to provide 24 hour, 7 days a week, 365 days a year coverage, they are required by this plan to immediately notify the Luzerne County 9-1-1 center via the 9-1-1 Supervisors line at (570) 819-4923 to place their unit status into "Unavailable for Dispatch" (or UAD). This allows the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system to bypass any agency who does not have adequate staffing and expedite response by going to next due. Agencies may also send a fax of their unit availability to the 9-1-1 center at (570) 825-3218 at the beginning of their shifts.

Agencies that do not comply with this plan and subsequently fails to crew for a call for service will be placed into "No Crew" status by Luzerne County 9-1-1. Once a unit is placed into No Crew status, the unit will not be placed back into service until the agency places their unit back into service via the 9-1-1 Supervisors telephone line. Any agency can verify the status of their ALS or BLS unit by using the Tri-Tech (Tiburon) WebQuery for their unit history for the day.

Agencies who utilize more than one station or "origin of dispatch" will be required to provide the location of individual units designated by the assigned Medic number and a corresponding letter.

EMS agencies will promptly notify the 9-1-1 center if any of their units will be on an Interfacility Transport (IF) or private transport and unavailable to respond for emergency calls. This change in status should be communicated to the 9-1-1 center as soon as it becomes apparent, as to not delay response or patient care. This notification will be made through the 9-1-1 Supervisors telephone line.

As soon as it becomes apparent that an EMS agency will not be able to respond for a call for service, it will be immediately communicated to the 9-1-1 center in order to expedite response from another provider. The agency will then be placed into No Crew status.

EMS Agency Concerns

Until such time that AVL is implemented, the practice of cancelling an already dispatched unit that has been sent to a call will be decided by the primary territory unit if they choose to. The primary unit will assume all liability and responsibility in determining that they are the closest appropriate available unit. The dispatcher will have discretion to ascertain the location of the primary territory unit via radio, if they are returning from the hospital or had been cleared from a previously dispatched call.

Luzerne County 9-1-1 dispatchers will have the discretion to divert resources to a more serious call if necessary. Units may request to divert prior to or while enroute to another incident. Responding units assume all liability with diversion requests.

Per established current policy, onscene command will be the only field unit/personnel that can deviate from an established protocol. This can include EMS, Fire or Police personnel who have given an on scene directive.

All toning sequences will continue until an apparatus goes **enroute**. Notifying the communications center of any other status will not stop the toning sequence. Examples of notifications that will not stop a toning sequence are as follows:

- "We have acknowledged the page"
- "We are assembling a crew"
- "We will be enroute shortly"
- "We have a full crew" or "crew manned"

As per PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009, dual or simultaneous dispatch does not satisfy the requirement for 24/7/365 coverage. Therefore, Luzerne County does not recognize dual dispatch to be a part of this communication center's policy or the countywide EMS response plan.

Luzerne County 9-1-1

Luzerne County 9-1-1 serves as the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. EMS agencies that are within the County of Luzerne and participate with Luzerne County 9-1-1 shall be subject to policies and procedures enacted and approved by the PA DOH. These policies and procedures are established to expedite 9-1-1 calls for service, which include all licensed EMS agencies under Luzerne County 9-1-1's auspices. Luzerne County through its Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocol, dispatches EMS resources when a call for service is received.

All municipalities within Luzerne County will be required to provide the PSAP with a primary ALS and BLS responder (1st Due units), with approval in writing from the Municipality itself or their authorized designee/s. Primary responders for any municipalities must assure their EMS license reflects their primary coverage area. Any 2nd due units and beyond will be discussed with the staff of Luzerne County 9-1-1 when requested to identify its merits and sensibility for a pre-determined response. Any 2nd due and beyond request that is not practical will be denied and an explanation will be provided. Any municipality that does not specify a primary responder will be sent the next closest available unit as identified by the PSAP.

All 2nd due units and beyond are pre-determined in the CAD by distance from the responders station location to the center of the municipality requesting response. This general distance is measured by Luzerne County Geospatial Information System (GIS) tools.

EMS of NEPA

EMS of NEPA, serving as the regional EMS council, assists the PA Department of Health in the licensing process, as well as other aspects of PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009.

EMS of NEPA will provide assistance, upon request, to any EMS agency concerned with meeting the requirements of the approved countywide EMS response plan.

Quality Improvement Plan:

Improvement for streamlined response and goals

First due dispatched EMS agencies will be in service to respond 95% of the time.

EMS agencies will notify Luzerne County 9-1-1 100% of the time when that agency will not be in operation due to inadequate staffing, when its resources are committed, or for any other reason the agency will not be able to respond with required staff to an EMS call.

All ALS based calls will be afforded two (2) initial tones at three (3) minute intervals for a total of six (6) minutes for both the BLS unit and the ALS unit. If the ALS or BLS unit does not crew within 6 minutes, they will be given a status of "Delayed Response" (DR). If there is no response from either the ALS or BLS unit at the time the transporting of the patient begins from another dispatched unit, the agency status will be changed from "Delayed Response" (DR) to a "No Crew" (NC). ALS units that are transport capable will handle the call and transport the patient if the BLS unit fails to crew or respond.

All BLS based calls will be afforded two (2) initial tones at three (3) minute intervals for a total of six (6) minutes for the BLS unit. If the dispatched unit does not go enroute by the six (6) minute mark, the unit will be given a status of "Delayed Response" (DR). The dispatchers will then ascertain who the next due response is and dispatch them at the same toning sequence. The 3rd due unit will be the appropriate available or closest staffed unit/agency. Any unit(s) that have not crewed by the time the patient is being transported, the agency status will be changed from "Delayed Response" (DR) to a "No Crew" (NC).

All out of service requests will be directed through the 9-1-1 Supervisors line at (570) 819-4923. Out of service calls received over the radio will be directed to contact the 9-1-1 Supervisors line for confirmation of the unit being placed out of service. Radio transmissions for out of service will not be acknowledged unless the unit was on a previous call, and will be out for an extended period of time as a result of the previous call. Promptly notifying the supervisor directly, via telephone, will alleviate confusion and there will be more accountability within the 9-1-1 center for tracking changes in unit status and availability. If the radio continues to be utilized by agencies calling in and out of service, the 9-1-1 center will not accept responsibility or be held liable for accuracy of unit/agency availability.

Definitions for Out of Service status:

- No Crew (NC or NOCREW) – Unit did not respond within the time from dispatch until transport of patient. A No Crew can also be documented if the department has reported a unit in service, has been given at least one (1) tone and then notifies the 9-1-1 center via the supervisor's line or radio that they will not have anyone for this call and to go next due.
- Delayed Response (DR) – Unit has been given an initial tone for a response and has not gone enroute within the six (6) minute toning sequence.
- Interfacility Transport (IF) – A private transport where a unit that normally would be available for a 9-1-1 call is now unavailable for any 9-1-1 calls.
- Unavailable for Dispatch (UAD) – When a unit or agency does not have adequate staff to maintain a 24/7/365 status. These units are placed into UAD and are automatically bypassed for the next due unit.
- Mechanical (MECH) – Unit has become incapacitated and will not be able to respond to emergency calls now or in the near future.
- Busy (BUSY) – this general out of service command is used for any and all other reasons for being out of service. (IE: funeral details, parades, meal break.)

Units that have received a No Crew will no longer be "automatically" placed back in service at 5am or 5pm by Luzerne County 9-1-1. Units will only be placed back into service when the agency notifies the 9-1-1 Supervisor that they now have a crew available. This notification shall be made via the 9-1-1 supervisor's telephone line.

"No Crew" will include any and all EMS calls for service that are missed. This includes areas where EMS units are sent as a 2nd due response or mutual aid agency.

An EMS agency shall respond to a call for emergency assistance as communicated by the PSAP, provided it is able to respond as requested. An EMS agency is able to respond as requested if it has the staff and an operational EMS vehicle capable of responding to the dispatch. An EMS agency may not refuse to respond to a dispatch based upon a desire to keep staff or an EMS vehicle in reserve to respond to other calls, to which it has not already committed. Any unit who refuses a dispatch is recorded as a No Crew and reported quarterly to EMS of NEPA.

When dispatched by Luzerne County 9-1-1, the EMS agency shall respond to a call for emergency assistance with certified staffing and licensed EMS vehicles.

Luzerne County 9-1-1 will no longer send any 2nd due or subsequent due BLS units to an ALS warranted call. When the 1st due BLS has failed to respond and is placed into No Crew status, the ALS unit will handle the transport as to not delay patient care and not wait on scene for another BLS agency to crew. The

only exception to this rule will be if the ALS unit is non-transport capable. All 2nd Due and subsequent BLS units will continue to be toned into an area where the primary responder is already on a call, No Crewed or UAD and they 'become' the 1st due unit.

All Quick Response Service (QRS) Units are required to be licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health. When these units are requested by an agency for calls, they will be allotted one tone only for response. If an area becomes depleted with resources due to an overabundance of calls, lack of enough staffed units or a Mass Casualty situation, the 9-1-1 center may require units to "move up" to help cover other parts of the county. Units will be released when enough units become available to handle calls in that territory.

Compliance and follow up details

It is the agency's responsibility to comply with the requirements of PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009. EMS of NEPA will notify the PA Department of Health of agencies that are not complying with the Countywide EMS Response Plan and are found to be in violation of PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009 requirements, which are subject to penalty.

An EMS Committee will be formed as a joint effort of Luzerne County 9-1-1, EMS of NEPA and various EMS agencies within Luzerne County. Collectively, this committee will come up with ideas, quality improvement and best practices for emergency responses (EMS) within Luzerne County.

A comparison report of response rates of 95% or less or 3 months in any 6 month period, will be tracked and reported to EMS of NEPA and if necessary will meet with the representatives of the agency to identify methods to improve their response rates. It will then be the agency's responsibility to implement a quality improvement plan. If there is continued response rates less than 95% with no improvement, EMS of NEPA will seek guidance from the PA Department of Health. EMS of NEPA, the EMS Committee or Luzerne County 9-1-1 may adjust the reporting percentage as necessary.

No Crew, Delayed Response and Unavailable for Dispatch instances will be reviewed quarterly by the EMS committee. EMS of NEPA will also receive out of service reports and follow up with the agencies for compliance with this plan, if necessary. These reports are posted for viewing at: http://www.luzernecounty911.com/nocrew.html

If any future Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) requirements are enacted either by EMS of NEPA and/or Luzerne County 9-1-1, Luzerne County 9-1-1 will dispatch the primary responder for a municipality and then use the next closest available unit determined by GPS location and availability. This section will be updated accordingly if and when AVL is implemented.

Compliance:

- It is the EMS agency's responsibility to comply with the requirements of the PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009.
- EMS of NEPA and the EMS Committee will receive quarterly reports from Luzerne County 9-1-1 reflecting the percentage of time that the participating EMS agency responded to a request for EMS assistance compared to total calls received.
- At three consecutive months of response rates of less than 95% by an agency or three months in any six month period, the EMS Committee will meet with representatives of the agency to identify methods to improve response rates. It will be the individual EMS agency's responsibility to implement a quality improvement plan.
- In the subsequent six months, if the agency attains three consecutive months of response rates of less than 95% or three months in the six month period, EMS of NEPA will seek guidance and report findings to the PA DOH of any EMS agencies that are not complying with this EMS systems response plan.

Affirmation of participation of Countywide EMS Response Plan

Being a participating EMS agency means agreeing to follow the operational policy when requesting or providing assistance within the scope of this EMS plan. All EMS agencies are to acknowledge and sign the countywide EMS response plan.

Participating agencies acknowledge that the requirements of this plan do not in any way relieve an agency from compliance with PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009, or impose any requirement or liability on plan participants or collaborating agencies that are not imposed by PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009.

Affirmation of Agency

The EMS Agency's Authorized Representative's signature below indicates the agency's agreement with this plan and acknowledges its intent to foster collaboration between participating EMS agencies in order to comply with PA EMS Systems Act 37 of 2009 and develop a sustainable EMS System for our Communities.

For the EMS agency participating in the Luzerne Countywide EMS plan:

_____

Signed Name

_____

Printed Name

_____

Agency Name

_____ _____

Date Position in Agency