



## Policy 625: Trauma Transport and Destination

Revision 9/10/22  
Effective 11/1/22

### I. Purpose

- A. To establish guidelines for determining the transport mode and hospital destination for trauma patients in Santa Cruz County.
- B. Authority for this policy is noted in Division 2.5, California Health and Safety Code, Sections 1797.222, 1798.162, 1798.163 California Code of Regulations Section 100255

### II. Definitions

- A. Red Criteria refers to physiologic and anatomic criteria indicative for high risk of serious injury. (see Policy 626 *Trauma Triage*) and are considered major trauma patients.
- B. Yellow Criteria refers to mechanism or EMS judgment criteria indicative of moderate risk for serious injury (see Policy 626 *Trauma Triage*) and are considered minor trauma patients
- C. "Pediatric patient" is < 15 years old.
- D. "Non-trauma patient" is a patient who does not meet any red or yellow criteria. (see Policy 626 *Trauma Triage*)

### III. Policy

- A. The Santa Cruz County Trauma Plan is driven by the tenet that all patients constituting both major and minor trauma should be triaged to the most appropriate receiving hospital.

### IV. General Principles on Guiding Mode and Destination Decisions

- A. When not otherwise specified herein, paramedics and EMTs will coordinate the appropriate transport mode with the Incident Commander. Base Station consultation may also be utilized to affect the best transport mode decision.
- B. Factors to consider include:
  1. Patient status (See Policy 621 *Patient Acuity Guidelines*)
    - a) In Extremis or unstable
    - b) Need for advanced field treatment
    - c) Need for immediate specialty care, such as pediatric, amputation, or burn
  2. Distance
    - a) Distance between the patient and the closest appropriate trauma center
    - b) The need to rendezvous at a distant LZ



3. Delays
  - a) Status of the roadway along the transport route (traffic, obstructions)
  - b) ETA of the air ambulance
  - c) Prolonged extrication
  - d) Weather at the scene, LZ, and destination
4. Resources
  - a) Extraordinary system wide demands for ambulances, such as an MCI
  - b) Need for more field treatment personnel on the scene
  - c) Hospital disaster, overload or diversion status
- C. Depending on traffic conditions, NMC is closer when south of HWY 1 and Freedom Blvd. VMC is closer when north of that intersection.
- D. When air transport is utilized, air crews will make the destination decision.

IV. Patients Meeting Red Criteria (see Policy 626 *Trauma Triage*)

- A. Patients meeting physiologic or anatomic criteria may be directly flown or driven to a trauma center without base station approval or notification. Mode and destination decisions are dependent on the catchment area.
  1. Santa Cruz County
    - a) Adult:
      - (1) Air transport should be considered according section IV B above:
      - (2) Otherwise, ground transport to the time-closest trauma center will be necessary.
    - b) Pediatric:
      - (1) Air transport should be considered according section IV B above
      - (2) Otherwise, ground transport to the time-closest pediatric trauma center will be necessary
  2. North Monterey County (Auto-Aid)
    - a) Adult:
      - (1) Ground transport directly to NMC.
    - b) Pediatric
      - (2) Air transport to a pediatric trauma center



(a) If air unavailable contact NMC first. If declined then ground transport to closest pediatric trauma center, typically VMC.

V. Patients Meeting Yellow Criteria only (see Policy 626 *Trauma Triage*)

- A. Transport to the closest emergency department.
- B. Base Station contact is required on Yellow Criteria patients. For North Monterey County incidents, contact with NMC is required, if declined then follow Santa Cruz County protocols
- C. If the Base Station directs transport to a trauma center, transport to the closest appropriate trauma center by ground only. The fact that only ground transport is authorized for this patient must be clearly communicated to the Base Physician.
- D. EMS Judgement (see Policy 626 *Trauma Triage*) may guide transportation to a trauma center or regional specialty center when no other trauma criteria are met. One example of such a patient may include those with digital amputations where the amputated part is intact and available for possible re-implantation. Base contact is recommended when such situations arise.

VI. Patients Meeting neither Red nor Yellow Criteria

- A. Patients who meet no trauma criteria may be injured (lacerations, fractured extremity etc.) but are not otherwise considered trauma patients and should generally be transported, by ground, to the closest appropriate emergency department. Location of the call, patient preference and hospital status and ambulance availability should be used to guide the destination decision within the county.

VII. Patients In-extremis

- A. In extremis trauma patients are those patients who are not considered likely to survive the transportation to a trauma center. These patients may be in cardiac arrest, or with profound, life-threatening airway, breathing or circulatory compromise, despite pre-hospital basic and advanced life support interventions. These patients will usually be transported to the closest Emergency Department.

VIII. Additional Guidelines:

- A. Paramedics and EMTs are encouraged to seek Base consultation when complex situations not otherwise specified in this policy arise regarding trauma transport destination or mode of transport.
- B. If a declared MCI is occurring elsewhere in the county, crews will not drive trauma patients out of county. When participating in a declared MCI, crews may drive patients no matter their trauma score, in accordance with the Transport Officer's directive.