

Policy Title: <b>SAFE AMBULANCE OPERATION: Use of Lights and Sirens</b>		No. L - 2
Chiefs Approval: 3/19/04	Effective: 4/1/04	Supersedes: 12/1/95
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## I. INTENT

Operators of EMS vehicles are afforded the privilege of using emergency lights and sirens (L&S) to decrease their response time to and transport of patients with life-threatening or potentially life-threatening conditions under specific circumstances outlined by this policy. Operating emergency vehicles with lights and sirens increases the potential for EMS vehicle crashes. Studies have shown that L&S may only decrease transport time by a couple of minutes in most systems and by less than one minute in many systems. Every decision to use L&S to transport must be based on the patient's clinical condition, the estimated time saved by a L&S transport, and the increased risk of an EMS vehicle crash during a L&S transport (adapted from Pennsylvania Dept. of Health protocol).

## II. POLICY

- A. **The EMS MD extends approval for ambulances to respond to an emergency call using lights and sirens.**
- B. All patients who require ALS care and/or meet **time-sensitive** patient criteria may be transported from the scene to a hospital ED **WITH** lights and sirens unless specifically contraindicated by the patient's condition. The EMS MD has declared that time sensitive patients and/or those who require ALS care under the auspices of System SOPs or direct medical control are considered to be *bone fide* emergencies and specifically authorizes EMTs to use lights and sirens while observing appropriate safe ambulance operation guidelines during transport.
- C. Transport of **unstable** patients who require ALS interhospital monitoring/interventions from one medical facility to another are also considered *bone fide* emergencies and may be conducted using lights and sirens while observing appropriate safe ambulance operation guidelines.
- D. All scheduled patient transports of stable patients from home to a medical facility, one medical facility to another, or from a medical facility to a patient's residence shall be conducted **WITHOUT** lights and sirens unless specifically ordered by the OLMC physician or an approved designee with the following exceptions:
  1. Paramedics and/or EMT-B's may request permission to transport using lights and sirens if they believe the patient's condition will be worsened by a delay equivalent to the time that can be gained by emergent transport using L&S.
  2. If a paramedic or EMT makes a reasonable attempt to establish OLMC with a System hospital with the intent of requesting permission to run with lights and sirens and cannot establish contact, the EMS MD authorizes the paramedic or EMT to use their best judgment in determining the need for lights and sirens based on the patient's condition.
  3. At no time shall a patient's safety or best interest be jeopardized due to a failed communication attempt with a system base station.

## III. SUPPORTING RATIONALE: 625 Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) SECTION 11-1421. Conditions for operating ambulances and rescue vehicles.

- A. (a) No person shall operate an ambulance or rescue vehicle in a manner not conforming to the motor vehicle laws and regulations of this State or of any political subdivision of this State as such laws and regulations apply to motor vehicles in general, unless in compliance with the following conditions:
  1. The person operating the ambulance shall be either responding to a *bone fide* emergency call or specifically directed by a licensed physician to disregard traffic laws in operating the ambulance during and for the purpose of the specific trip or journey that is involved;

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2. The ambulance or rescue vehicle shall be equipped with a siren producing an audible signal of an intensity of 100 decibels at a distance of 50 feet from the siren, and with a lamp or lamps emitting an oscillating, rotating or flashing red beam directed in part toward the front of the vehicle, and these lamps shall have sufficient intensity to be visible at 500 feet in normal sunlight, and in addition to other lighting requirements, excluding those vehicles operated in counties with a population in excess of 2,000,000, may also operate with a lamp or lamps emitting an oscillating, rotating, or flashing green light;
  3. The aforesaid siren and lamp or lamps shall be in operation at all times when it is reasonably necessary to warn pedestrians and other drivers of the approach thereof during such trip or journey;
  4. Whenever the ambulance or rescue vehicle is operated at a speed in excess of 40 miles per hour, the ambulance or rescue vehicle shall be operated in complete conformance with every other motor vehicle law and regulation of this State and of the political subdivision in which the ambulance or rescue vehicle is operated, relating to the operation of motor vehicles in general, except laws and regulations pertaining to compliance with official traffic-control devices or to vehicular operation upon the right half of the roadway; and
  5. The ambulance shall display registration plates identifying the vehicle as an ambulance.
- B. The foregoing provisions do not relieve the driver of an ambulance or rescue vehicle from the duty of driving with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor do such provisions protect the driver from the consequences resulting from the reckless disregard for the safety of others.

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John M. Ortinau, M.D., FACEP  
EMS Medical Director

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Connie J. Mattera, M.S., R.N.  
EMS Administrative Director