



Title	Field Pronouncements of Death		
Policy Number	15-02	Approved	11-19-2015
Related Forms	None	Revised	
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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to standardize the practices used by EMS services in Saratoga County for field pronouncement of death. Field pronouncements of death and field termination of resuscitation are permitted under the New York State BLS protocols and the REMO (Regional Emergency Medical Organization) Collaborative New York Protocols. A standardized approach to disposition of the deceased is necessary to assure that proper notifications are made, the privacy and dignity of the deceased is respected, and that the chain of custody is preserved.

**Terms:**

Field Pronouncement – a decision made in the field that a patient is deceased and either no resuscitative measures will be initiated or any resuscitation in progress will be terminated.

Secure – a decision made in the field, usually in consultation with on-line medical control (OLMC), that a patient is deceased and any ongoing resuscitative efforts will be discontinued.

Public location – a location, either indoor or outdoor, whether privately or publicly owned, to which the public has access, either by right or invitation.

Private location – a location, either indoor or outdoor, used by one or more individuals for private gathering or other personal purposes. Also referred to as private property.

Obvious death – a patient who, on presentation to EMS, meets criteria currently in effect to be considered deceased and not eligible for any resuscitative measures.

**Policy/Procedure:**

1. When a field pronouncement is made or secure order issued for a patient in a private location, EMS will contact Communications and request law enforcement to the scene.
  - a. ALS providers should record a rhythm strip; leave electrodes on the body and a copy of the strip with the body. If OLMC was consulted, the hospital and physician number should be noted.
  - b. Any invasive lines, tubes or catheters inserted should be left in the body. Lines can be capped.
  - c. EMS shall remain on scene until arrival of law enforcement.
  - d. Custody of the deceased should be turned over to law enforcement.
  - e. Law enforcement will consult with the County Coroner to determine if a response is needed or if the patient’s attending physician can/will certify the death.
2. When a field pronouncement is made or secure order issued for a patient in a public location or in an ambulance, the patient will be transported to a receiving hospital.
  - a. The closest hospital is preferable with deference to the preference of OLMC.

- b. There is no DOH restriction on transporting a patient who has been pronounced in the field or for whom a secure order has been issued.
  - c. Under no circumstances should a deceased individual be removed from an ambulance and placed in a public or private location except a hospital, mortuary, or other facility licensed to accept deceased individuals (except as noted in #3 below).
3. When a nursing home patient with a written Do Not Resuscitate is being transported and expires during transport, EMS shall contact the destination receiving facility to ascertain if they will accept the patient. If not, the patient should be returned to the sending facility (per NYS DOH Health Facilities Series Memo 92-32, page 14-4).
  4. When a field pronouncement or secure order is issued for a patient in a location deemed by law enforcement to be a crime scene or potential crime scene, the disposition of the deceased will be at the direction of law enforcement.



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Reviewed and accepted by the Saratoga County EMS Council  
November 12, 2015