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| ***REPLACE WITH YOUR MASTHEAD*** | | |
| **VFIS logo black JPG** | **SOG Title:** | |
| **SOG Number:** | |
| **Original Date:** | **Revision Date:** |
| **ABC Fire Department General Operating Guideline** | | |

**Cellular Telephone Use in EMS**

***This is a sample of a standard operating guideline (SOG) on this topic. You should review the content, modify as appropriate for your organization, have it reviewed by your leadership team and if appropriate your legal counsel. Once adopted, make sure the SOG is communicated to members, implemented and performance monitored for effective implementation.***

**Purpose:**

To provide guidelines for the use of cellular phone during times when performing emergency medical care.

**Procedure:**

Emergency medical services have long recognized complete and accurate written documentation as an important part of patient care and legal protection for emergency medical caregivers. However, any verbal communications regarding a patient’s condition and/or treatment could be as crucial, if not more so, than accurate written documentation. This makes the ability to capture, store and retrieve verbal communications very important. Advancements in technology and the availability of this technology have made devices such as cellular telephones part of our everyday activities. While cell phones offer a means of convenient communication, they provide new challenges in proper documentation to protect EMS providers and caregivers.

If your agency relies on the use of cellular telephones in place of or to supplement recorded radio communication to discuss patient information with medical control, you should take steps to ensure that these communications are recorded. A lack of recorded communications could prove detrimental to your emergency service organization and/or the individual caregiver if a lawsuit regarding patient care should arise. Without the proof recorded communications can cause questions regarding patient care, pre-arrival instructions, hospital diversions, changes in protocols and medications or information conflicts to/from on-line medical control would have to be answered very subjectively.

To help reduce this exposure when communicating with on-line medical control, VFIS recommends the following measures:

* Encourage the use of recorded radio communication whenever possible and practical.
* Consider restricting the use of cellular telephones during on-line medical control communications. If there is no other alternative, only departmental issued equipment (cell phone) can be used for this purpose.
* Make provisions to record any cellular telephone conversations if they will still be allowed and consider the following possible action steps:
  + Route cellular telephone calls to on-line medical control facility through the 9-1-1 communications center on a dedicated and recorded line.
  + Have the on-line medical facility dedicate a recorded telephone line specifically for cellular telephone communications.
  + Provide a two-line dedicated phone that allows the incoming EMS call to simultaneously route the call back to a recorder at either the 9-1-1 center or emergency service organization.
* Amend protocols to state that direct care providers are to make notations on the patient care reports when non recorded telecommunications are used during patient assessment and/or treatment.
* Protect all patient information as required by Federal Law (HIPAA).

Finally, consult your telecommunications provider or your 9-1-1 center management for advice on the most effective and cost-efficient method for recording these calls.

***This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization’s needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm or damage to personnel, property and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control representative.***

**References:**

VFIS Communique – “Cellular Telephone Use in EMS”