



MEMORANDUM

March 27, 2008

To: Patrick County Licensed EMS Agencies:

Subject: Loss of Emergency Department Physician Coverage at RJ Reynolds Patrick County Community Hospital

In communication with Dr. Dianne Rowell, Operational Medical Director and the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services, and in compliance with the Western Virginia EMS Council Patient Destination Policy which provides for transport of patients to the **closest appropriate facility**, it has been determined that transportation of **emergent** patients to RJ Reynolds Patrick County Community Hospital would not be appropriate without a physician available to provide online medical direction and to receive the patient upon arrival at RJR-PCCH. While this hospital has made a commitment to have an on-call physician available within 30 minutes of patient arrival at their hospital, there is no means in place for online medical direction to EMS providers in Patrick County.

If your EMS agency has a critical patient and RJ Reynolds would be the closest facility, a telephone call to find out whether a physician is present in the Emergency Department would be appropriate, however, if a physician is not present, transport should be initiated to the nearest appropriate facility to your EMS agency call territory as defined by the following Western Virginia EMS Destination policy:

Ambulance Patient Destination Policy

SCOPE: This policy pertains to all licensed EMS agencies providing basic, advanced and specialized ambulance transportation.

PURPOSE: To provide for a defined, consistent policy for the destination of ambulance patients consistent with quality patient care and regional medical protocol.

POLICY ELEMENTS:

1. All ambulance patients (resulting from requests for emergency assistance that result in transport) will normally be transported to the closest **appropriate** hospital emergency department unless redirected by the Medical Control Physician. The closest appropriate hospital is defined as the hospital closest to the location of the patient that can provide the level of care needed by the patient. The Medical Control Physician is defined as the attending emergency department physician at the hospital contacted by radio, cellular phone, or other means by the prehospital provider attending to the patient to be transported.
2. Stable patients may be transported to the patient's destination of choice if allowed by local EMS agency policies and available resources.
3. Patients that meet certain criteria as severe trauma patients, as defined in the Western Virginia Regional Trauma Triage Plan, will normally be transported directly to a Level I or Level II Trauma Center unless redirected by the Medical Control Physician as defined in the trauma triage plan.
4. Individual EMS agencies are responsible for determining operational policies related to the most effective ambulance deployment and utilization patterns. This may include policies allowing transport of stable patients to hospitals of a patient's choice.
5. In mass casualty incident (MCI) situations, transport patterns and destinations may be altered, as directed in the MCI plan(s) that are in place governing the incident.

6. Other policies and protocols related to patient transport and ambulance-to-hospital communications are defined in the Western Virginia EMS Council "*Operational Protocols*," current edition.
7. In no event shall patient destination be selected based upon the participation or non-participation of the hospital or the ambulance service in the Council's Ambulance Restocking Program.

The nearest appropriate facilities to the Patrick County transport areas are:

Memorial Hospital of Martinsville/Henry County	-	(276) 666-7240
Northern Hospital of Surry County, Mt. Airy, NC	-	(336) 719-7009
Twin County Regional Hospital, Galax, VA	-	(276) 236-8181

If there are other facilities that are closer to your coverage territory, please continue to utilize those facilities. Also, additional consideration should be given to the use of air transport of critical patients.

Drug Box Exchange

Until further notice, RJ Reynolds Patrick County Community Hospital will continue to exchange drug boxes for patients taken to other out-of-region facilities that do not participate in our exchange program. If you open a drug box while handling a patient that is transported out of the WVEMS region, you may return it for exchange at RJR-PCCH.

We appreciate your diligence in continuing to provide quality patient care. If you have any questions concerning this issue, please contact Mr. Charles Berger, Field Coordinator at (276) 634-4771 or Ms. Debbie Akers, Regional Education Coordinator at (540) 562-3482. Both may also be reached toll-free at (800) 972-4367.