

Monterey County EMS System Policy



Policy Number: 4100
Effective Date: 7/1/2019
Review Date: 6/30/2022

PRE-HOSPITAL DETERMINATION OF DEATH

I. PURPOSE

To establish medical criteria for determination of death.

II. POLICY

- A. If there is any doubt about the patient meeting the criteria for determination of death, CPR shall be initiated and resuscitative measures shall be provided.
- B. Base contact is required for any situation that does not specifically meet the criteria of this policy.
- C. In all cases where death has been determined, the Coroner or law enforcement agency with jurisdiction shall be notified. A first responder or ambulance provider shall remain on scene until released by either law enforcement or a Coroner's office representative.

III. PROCEDURE

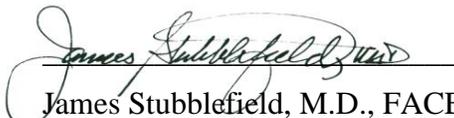
- A. Signs of Obvious Death.
 - 1. Decapitation.
 - 2. Incineration.
 - 3. Rigor Mortis.
 - 4. Post-Mortem lividity.
 - 5. Decomposition.
 - 6. Separation of vital organs from the body or destruction of organs that is obviously incompatible with life and the absence of life signs.
- B. Other Criteria for Determination of Death.
 - 1. Absence of life signs when there are multiple victims and resuscitation would hinder care of more viable patients.
 - 2. Patient in Asystole after treatment under the Asystole/PEA protocol.
 - 3. The patient is pulseless and apneic with a valid DNR order or the Attorney-in-Fact named in a DPAHCD directs that resuscitative measures not be provided.
- C. Patient in Asystole or wide complex PEA with a heart rate less than 40 following significant blunt trauma or penetrating trauma to the head, neck, or torso.
- D. Death Scene Management.
 - 1. Request the response of the law enforcement agency that has jurisdiction and Coroner office notification.

2. The individual with Incident Command responsibility shall be responsible for the deceased until the arrival of law enforcement or coroner deputy.
3. The deceased shall not be moved except when the body hinders care of other patients.
4. EMS personnel shall not search the deceased for identification or other information.
5. EMS personnel shall take reasonable precautions to not disturb the scene or immediate surroundings of the deceased except as needed to perform patient care activities. Notification shall be made to law enforcement or coroner deputy regarding any disturbance of the scene.

IV. NOTES

- A. When a patient meets criteria for Determination of Death and CPR has been started by a member of the public, CPR may be stopped by EMS personnel. Base contact is not required.
- B. ALS personnel shall provide EKG documentation on the PCR when the patient is placed on the heart monitor.
- C. ALS personnel may stop CPR that has been started by BLS personnel if the patient meets criteria for Determination of Death.

END OF POLICY


James Stubblefield, M.D., FACEP
EMS Medical Director


Michael Petrie, EMT-P, MBA, MA
EMS Bureau Chief