

# Monterey County EMS System Policy



Policy Number: 4510  
Effective Date: 1/1/2015  
Review Date: 6/30/2018

## TOURNIQUET

### I. PURPOSE

- A. To specify the indications for use of tourniquets.

### II. POLICY

- A. Tourniquets may be used for significant active bleeding in an extremity according to the indications listed below.
- B. Only commercially produced tourniquets may be stocked by Monterey County EMS Service providers. Tourniquets may be improvised for use when the number of patients or extent of injuries deplete the stock of tourniquets available at the scene.
- C. Tourniquet use is approved for paramedic, EMT, EMR, and public safety personnel trained in its use.

### III. INDICATIONS

- A. A tourniquet should be used in the following situations:
  - 1. In the presence of significant active bleeding
    - a) When direct pressure is unable to control the bleeding.
    - b) In the presence of impaled/penetrating objects when direct pressure is unable to be used to control bleeding.
    - c) When direct pressure has the potential to cause further injury to a mangled extremity
  - 2. In the presence of multiple patients and the time needed to control bleeding through direct pressure would potentially interfere with other lifesaving activities.
  - 3. In the tactical environment when scene safety is a concern. In this situation a tourniquet may be used as the initial method to control active bleeding.

### IV. PROCEDURE

- A. Follow manufacturer's guidelines for application
- B. The tourniquet must not be applied over a joint.
- C. The tourniquet is to be applied at least 2-3 inches proximal to the injury/bleeding site. It is preferable to place the tourniquet proximal to the elbow for injuries to the forearm or hand and proximal to the knee for injuries to the lower leg or foot.
- D. Tighten the tourniquet enough to stop the bleeding and also until a distal pulse cannot be felt.
- E. Reassess for bleeding.

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1. If bleeding from the wound starts after the tourniquet has been placed, attempt to control the bleeding with direct pressure to the wound or tighten the tourniquet until the bleeding stops.
- F. A second tourniquet may be utilized if bleeding is unable to be controlled with the first tourniquet. The second tourniquet should be placed next to and proximal to the first tourniquet. Do not remove the first tourniquet after applying the second tourniquet.
  - G. Do not remove the tourniquet once it is in place except by physician order.
    1. An improvised tourniquet may be removed after placement of a commercial tourniquet. If the improvised tourniquet prevents placement of the commercial tourniquet due to its location, it may be removed prior to placement of the commercial tourniquet.
  - H. Clearly identify that the patient has a tourniquet in place.
  - I. Consider pain management unless clinically contraindicated.
  - J. Remove any jewelry, clothing, etc. from the affected extremity.

### V. NOTES

- A. Even with proper tourniquet application, bleeding may not be fully controlled. This is most likely in patients with large arms or legs.
- B. Do not place a tourniquet over the site of a fracture or suspected fracture.
- C. Should it be necessary to improvise a tourniquet due to a shortage of available commercial devices, the improvised tourniquet should be at least 2 inches in width. Elastic type materials that stretch should be avoided.
- D. Clearly identify the presence of and location(s) of tourniquet(s) on turnover of the patient to other care providers.
- A. Poorly applied or unnecessary tourniquets applied by bystanders or lesser trained personnel may be removed by EMS personnel. A new tourniquet should be applied if indicated by uncontrolled bleeding.

**END OF POLICY**