



Emergency Medical Services Agency Prehospital Care Manual **Policy 600**

FIELD PRONOUNCEMENT OF DEATH

Effective Date January 22, 2007
Replaces August 1, 2003

Resources

None

I. Purpose

To avoid unnecessary or prolonged resuscitation of persons for whom recovery is not possible or probable, and to define when care may be withheld or discontinued by emergency medical service personnel.

II. Criteria

In addition to any specific criteria for withholding or discontinuing resuscitation contained within individual treatment protocols, resuscitative efforts may be withheld, discontinued and/or death pronounced under the following circumstances:

- A. Decapitation
- B. Total incineration of the body
- C. Decomposition of the body
- D. Rigor mortis accompanied by post mortem lividity
- E. A pulseless patient with total separation or obvious destruction of the heart, brain, and/or lungs.
- F. A pulseless and/or apneic patient with a valid Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) directive (refer to *Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)* policy).

- G. A patient who has been known to be pulseless and apneic for at least ten (10) minutes as reported by a competent adult who has given detailed observations of the patient prior to the arrival of the EMT/paramedic and the patient exhibits all of the following signs/symptoms:
1. Asystole (confirmed on semi-automatic defibrillator or in two leads on a cardiac monitor) for sixty (60) seconds.
 2. Fixed and dilated pupils.

II. Actions

- A. If the above criteria are met the emergency response personnel will:
1. Discontinue or withhold resuscitative efforts.
 2. Cancel any prehospital personnel still enroute.
 3. Provide appropriate comfort and care to family and bystanders.
 4. Complete a Prehospital Care Report documenting care/actions taken, including reasons for pronouncing death and all communications made with necessary times provided.

III. Notification

- A. Notify the appropriate authorities regarding the death, and remain on scene until released by the local law enforcement or Coroner's Office personnel.
1. If the decedent is at home or in a public place, contact the local law enforcement agency.
 2. If the decedent is at an acute or residential care facility (Skilled Nursing Facility, etc.) the staff of the facility will make the appropriate arrangements.

V. Exceptions

Multiple Casualty Incident – The Agency Multiple Casualty Incident (MCI) Plan (including S.T.A.R.T. triage) will be used at all multiple casualty events.