



County of San Diego

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS REQUIRING COMPLETE AMBULANCE DIVERSION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demands on the county's entire healthcare continuum. [Hospitals requesting ambulance diversion](#) is a tool to relieve emergency department (ED) saturation. Several facilities have recently requested complete ambulance diversion. This memo clarifies the process for EDs requiring complete ambulance diversion as a temporary measure to help resolve ED saturation. All facilities, regardless of diversion status, shall continue to accept EMS patients with uncontrollable life-threatening problems.¹

The County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Duty Officer is available 24 hours a day/seven days a week at 619-588-0397 to assist hospitals and field providers in managing the EMS system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the EMS Duty Officer will review complete ambulance diversion requests OR may determine that an ED is saturated and cannot safely continue to receive patients. The EMS Duty Officer may initiate County Ambulance Diversion for a 4-hour period. County Ambulance Diversion may be extended following subsequent EMS Duty Officer consultation with the affected ED.

When the LEMSA initiates County Ambulance Diversion or approves a hospital's request, the EMS Duty Officer will send a Resource Bridge alert notifying system participants that all non-acute ambulance (ALS/BLS) traffic shall be diverted to other receiving facilities until the County Ambulance Diversion condition has concluded.

Should the ED situation resolve, the EMS Duty Officer may re-evaluate the improving circumstances and cancel the County Ambulance Diversion. If the County Ambulance Diversion creates an undue strain on the EMS delivery system, the EMS Duty Officer may conclude the County Ambulance Diversion at any time to facilitate patient safety and quality EMS patient care.

Thank you for the outstanding care you provide to our patients, day in and day out. We recognize and appreciate your dedication during the special conditions of this pandemic.

Respectfully,

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, FIFEM, FAEMS, Medical Director
Emergency Medical Services
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cc: Nick Yphantides, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer
Andrew Parr, EMS Administrator

¹ Uncontrollable life-threatening problems include patients in non-traumatic cardiac arrest, and with unresolved anaphylaxis, airway issues, or uncontrolled non-traumatic hemorrhage.