October 6, 2022

NEEDLE THORACOSTOMY 3.25” 14g SHORTAGES – TEMPORARY SUBSTITUTION/EXEMPTION GRANTED

The San Diego County EMS Office is aware that the 3.25” 14g decompression needles carried by many of our EMS providers are in shortage via some distributors.

I grant a temporary exemption through October 31, 2023, for thoracostomy needles required in paramedic ambulance and first responder inventories. The inventories listed in County of San Diego EMS Policies S-103 and P-806 are temporarily modified to permit EMS agencies to substitute 3.25” 10g needles in place of 3.25” 14g thoracostomy needles when all logistic and training conditions are met. Agencies must exhaust all reasonable ordering and distribution options prior to considering this substitution. This would include accessing sources outside of your regular supply chains.

14g decompression needles, the San Diego County standard, remain preferred. All paramedics issued this temporary equipment substitution must receive education and hands-on training before implementation. Local and national experts have provided their support for this temporizing practice.

Please notify County EMS via EMSNotifications@sdcounty.ca.gov if any additional changes occur to the ability to obtain 3.25” 14g thoracostomy needles.

Thank you for your assistance in continuing to provide outstanding care to our patients.

Sincerely,

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, FIFEM, FAEMS, Medical Director
San Diego County Emergency Medical Services Office
San Diego County Fire

cc: Andrew Parr, EMS Administrator