



Public Health Division  
Emergency Medical Services

# County of Santa Cruz

## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

POST OFFICE BOX 962, 1080 EMELINE AVE., SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061  
TELEPHONE: (831) 454-4751 FAX: (831) 454-4488 TDD: Call 711

March 9, 2020

### **SUBJECT: SANTA CRUZ COUNTY EMS POLICIES FOR THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

It is reasonable to expect that this outbreak will continue to expand in Santa Cruz County. As we transition our strategy from containment to mitigation it will be critically important to triage and treat patients at appropriate care sites in order maintain capacity at our acute care hospitals and improve patient care overall.

Today (March 7, 2020) the California EMSA Agency (<https://emsa.ca.gov>), through authority granted by the Governor's Emergency Proclamation, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/3.4.20-Coronavirus-SOE-Proclamation.pdf> has established a procedure for designating alternate destinations other than hospitals for direct EMS transportation of suspected COVID-19 patients.

Anticipating a surge in demand for EMS and health care services as well as potential health care workforce shortages, local EMS policies for three (3) categories of patients are being developed, summarized as follows:

1. Moderate to High Acuity: Transportation to acute care hospitals or alternate care sites
2. Low Acuity with Risk Factors: Transportation (EMS or self) to alternate destinations
3. Low Acuity: Assess and refer, No EMS transport, encourage home care

As of yet, we have not identified any alternate destinations or alternate care sites in Santa Cruz County (alternate destinations located on the campus of an acute care hospital, such as a triage tent or other part of the hospital do not apply and are automatically authorized).

Should any clinics or health care systems (Kaiser, Sutter, Dignity, Central Coast Alliance or others) wish to establish alternate destinations and receive appropriately screened, Category 2 patients directly to their clinics, urgent care centers, or other established care sites then please let me know and I will initiate the application process.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Santa Cruz County**

I will need the following information for the application:

- The level of medical staff, and the availability of the staff at various times to care for patients requiring services at the alternate destination.
- The ability of staff to care for the degree and severity of the patients' conditions.
- The availability of more comprehensive emergency medical services and the distance and travel time necessary to make the alternative emergency medical services available if the non-permitted medical facility is unable to care for the patient.
- The equipment and services that are available at the facility necessary to care for patients requiring COVID-19 services or emergency medical services and the severity of their condition.
- The hours of operation, and any limitations of the non-permitted medical facility, which may negatively impact the treatment of patients requiring COVID-19 services or other emergency medical services.
- Policy and/or protocols for determining the appropriate use of alternate destination(s).
- Training for EMS personnel on all protocols for determining transport to an alternate destination including PPE, COVID-19 signs and symptoms, alternate destination availability and capabilities, and data collection methods.
- Policies for data collection to include, but not limited to, transport to the alternate destinations, reasons for transport(s), any secondary transports of these patients, and outcome when available.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly if you have questions. I can be reached at [david.ghilarducci@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:david.ghilarducci@santacruzcounty.us)

Sincerely,



David Ghilarducci MD  
Medical Director