



**COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS  
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE POLICY**

<b>Policy No.</b> 6930	<b>Date Issued:</b> June 1, 1996
<b>Section:</b> 6900 – Specific Procedures, Continued	<b>Date Revised:</b> November 9, 2020
Accreditation Standards: None	
<b>SUBJECT: DETERMINATION OF DEATH</b>	
<b>APPROVED:</b> <signed copy on file>	_____
	Santa Cruz County EMS
<b>APPROVED:</b> <signed copy on file>	_____
	San Benito County EMS
<b>APPROVED:</b> <signed copy on file>	_____
	American Medical Response
<b>APPROVED:</b> <signed copy on file>	_____
	Dennis Kidd, General Manager

When receiving a report of a deceased person, direct the call to the Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) program and observe the following guidelines.

**Declaration or Pronouncement of Death**

NetCom personnel may not declare or pronounce any patient dead, even though the EMD program may determine a patient is dead.

In the event that one or more of the following obvious death conditions is reported, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) need not be initiated, as per the EMD program.

- Decapitation
- Total incineration, burned beyond recognition

- Rigor mortis – body is stiff, pulseless, breathless, and is located in a non-hypothermic environment (i.e., body is inside as opposed to outside in a cold environment)
- Decomposition
- Non-recent death. Six or more hours have passed since the incident or injury occurred.
- Severe injuries obviously incompatible with life
- Submersion (> 6 hours)
- Request for a “coroner only” by an on-scene physician or registered nurse.

If none of the above conditions exist and it was an expected death, EMD protocols shall be followed. Reports of lividity, “cold”, or “looks dead” are not viable determinants for a deceased person. In these cases, fire and paramedic personnel should be dispatched and EMD protocols followed.

If the caller makes any opening statement similar to “I think s/he’s dead”, all personnel will immediately ask “is this an emergency that requires a paramedic?”

- If the answer is anything but “no”, immediately create an E call in CAD in accordance with Policy No. 6410.80 (Requests for Emergency Medical Assistance for “Not Breathing” Patients).
- If the answer is “no”, non-EMDs will transfer to an EMD in accordance with Policy No. 7440 (Using the EMD Transfer Line and Facilitation of Non-EMD). No E call will be created in CAD.
- In the event that an EMD is not available, non-EMDs will create a NOEMD with a modifying circumstance of NA, as is current practice.
- If the answer is “no”, EMDs will utilize the delay send and continue feature in ProQA. No E call will be created in CAD nor will the fast track tool in ProQA be used.

### **Response**

In all situations, dispatch appropriate law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical resources per CAD recommendations.