

Sheriff's Department Response to Grand Jury on Emergency Medical Services

Findings:

1. Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center is not staffed by trained Emergency Medical Dispatchers.

The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding. However, during the week of September 9th, 2002, the dispatchers employed at the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center will be trained in the procedures and policies of emergency medical dispatching.

2. Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center does not have written policy or proper protocol established for dispatchers regarding interrogation, prioritized dispatch and pre-arrival instructions. Without such a policy and protocol, the County is open to liability should a Dispatcher erroneously offer "Good Samaritan" medical advise.

The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding. As with finding number 1 above, Dispatchers will be EMD trained beginning the week of September 9th, 2002 and the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (PHD) will monitor and evaluate the Emergency Medical Dispatch program (EMD) through the office of Emergency Medical Services. Written policy and protocols have been developed by the PHD EMS. These will be included as training materials the week of September 9 and will be implemented by the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center upon the conclusion of the training.

3. The Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center and a software consultant have been working to install and modify a CAD system to provide the County Emergency Medical Services Department with electronic data so that it can monitor AMR's response time as required by the existing contract.

The Sheriff's Department agrees with this finding. The material related in this finding has been completed by the software contractor. The data requested by the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department - Office of Emergency Medical Services is being transferred from the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) computer in the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center is being electronically transferred in real time to Public Health's EMS office.

Recommendations:

1. The Grand Jury recommends the Sheriff expedite the training of all Emergency Dispatcher to be Emergency Medical Dispatchers. The proper training would

improve the safety of the ambulance crews and the general public by authorizing trips not requiring lights and sirens or the response of the Fire Department.

The recommendation has not yet been implemented by the Sheriff's Department, but will be implemented in the future. The training of dispatchers within the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center in the policy and procedures of Emergency Medical Dispatching will begin the week of September 9th, 2002. After the training period, EMD will be fully implemented and become operational for the County Center. The Fire Departments within the County will have to evaluate their own policy as to responses to medical calls within their respective jurisdictions. If they agree to the prioritization procedures of EMD, then this recommendation will be fully met.

2. Adopt the medical protocols offered by the County Medical Director of Emergency Medical Services. These protocols are presently being used by Ventura County.

The recommendation has not yet been implemented by the Sheriff's Department, but will be implemented in the future. The Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center is adopting the policies and procedures of the Medical Director of Emergency Medical Services of the County of Santa Barbara. These protocols will be used in the training of dispatch personnel in September when they are taught EMD. After training, Emergency Medical Dispatching will be implemented by the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center.

3. Expedite the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System effort, presently in final testing, permitting the County Emergency Medical Staff to monitor AMR performance without the manual efforts now required of AMR.

This recommendation has been implemented. The software vendor has finished the changes to the CAD system that allow the transfer of data on AMR responses to the Emergency Medical Services office of the County of Santa Barbara Department of Public Health. The data has been transferred from the dispatch center to public health since the middle of July, 2002.