

BULLETIN

NO: 21 - 009  
DATE: January 15, 2021  
TO: All Personnel  
FROM: Chris Heiser, Deputy Chief, Emergency Medical Services  
SUBJECT: Updated BLS Ambulance Downgrade Process

To free up ALS ambulances during this pandemic, effective immediately, our process for BLS downgrades has changed. All ALS first responders and ALS ambulances are encouraged to request BLS ambulances to transport patients meeting the County BLS Downgrade policy S-412.

**The criteria and new procedures for BLS downgrades are as follows:**

1. First responders and ambulances will respond to the 911 request per policy.
2. Following a complete ALS assessment, if the determination has been made that the patient does not or will not require ALS intervention, the Company Officer or the ALS ambulance crew will contact dispatch on 7E and request the ETA of a BLS ambulance.
3. If the ETA is less than 30 minutes, a "No Code" BLS ambulance will be dispatched.
4. A Paramedic shall make Base Hospital contact and give an appropriate radio report. The report shall include a request for a BLS Downgrade. If approved by the Base Hospital, follow steps 5-8 below.
5. A first responder or ALS unit must remain at scene until the BLS ambulance has arrived.
  - If both the ALS first responder and ALS ambulance are at scene, the ALS ambulance will be released by the Company Officer.
  - If the ALS first responder is at scene and the ALS ambulance is still responding, the Company Officer will cancel the ALS Ambulance.
  - If the ALS ambulance is at scene and the ALS first responder is still responding, the ALS first responder will continue in "No Code," be given a turnover by the ALS ambulance crew, release the ALS ambulance crew, and wait for the arrival of the BLS ambulance.
6. Upon arrival of the BLS ambulance, the Paramedic will give a complete turnover to the BLS crew, including the transfer of the ePCR that was initiated by the ALS provider.
7. Once the patient is loaded into the BLS unit, the ALS first responder unit may go available.
8. Per County EMS, separate patient care reports are no longer required by both the ALS and BLS units. Units shall utilize agency code 506 in the ePCR for both ALS and BLS units. The BLS unit will complete the transferred ePCR.

EMS will review all BLS downgrades for compliance with County EMS policy S-412.

Any questions or concerns shall be directed to Captain Cory Beckwith, EMS Operations Coordinator at [cbeckwith@sandiego.gov](mailto:cbeckwith@sandiego.gov) or (858) 395-4135.