

Hennepin County EMS System
Hospital Closure and Ambulance Diversion Policy
Approved by the Hennepin County EMS Council
Effective 10/12/2023

1. Purpose

To provide guidelines to medical control hospitals and ALS-licensed Ambulance Providers responding to unscheduled 9-1-1 requests in the Hennepin County EMS system to effectively handle necessary adjustments in patient disposition. Ambulances may be requested to divert patients from their intended hospital or stand-alone Emergency Department (ED) of choice when one or more hospitals experience a physical plant failure, security lockdown, or other unexpected conditions that would significantly impact the quality of care that can be provided to incoming patients.

This policy is meant to limit the diversion of ambulances from the requested or intended hospital or stand-alone ED destinations, which may result in:

- Prolonged out-of-hospital care when definitive hospital-based resources are needed, especially for unstable or critical patients;
- Inappropriate attempts by field personnel to predict the specific diagnostic and therapeutic resources needed by individual patients;
- Unacceptably prolonged transport times; and/or
- Delays in, or lack of, ambulance availability to the community because of diversion of units to distant hospitals.

2. Definitions

2.1. **Diversion:** The re-direction of an ambulance from the intended or requested receiving facility to an alternate receiving facility.

2.2. **Medical Control Hospital:** All hospitals or stand-alone ED's that have trained physicians available to give medical control to ambulances operating under an ALS license in Hennepin County. For purposes of this policy, the hospitals include:

- Abbott Northwestern
- WestHealth (stand-alone ED)
- Children's Hospital - Minneapolis
- MHealth Fairview Southdale Hospital
- MHealth Fairview University of Minnesota Medical Center
 - Masonic Children's Hospital
 - East Bank (University campus)
 - West Bank (Riverside campus)
- HCMC (Hennepin County Medical Center)
- Maple Grove Hospital
- Mercy Hospital
- Methodist Hospital

- North Memorial Health Hospital
- Ridgeview Medical Center
- St. Francis Medical Center
- Two Twelve Medical Center (stand-alone ED)
- Unity Hospital

2.3. **Open Status:** “Open” refers to hospitals or stand-alone ED’s that are able to accept and assess all categories and types of patients brought by ambulance to their emergency department.

2.4. **Full Closed Status:** “Closed” refers to hospitals or stand-alone ED’s that are unable to accept patients arriving by ambulance.

2.5. **System Medical Director:** The EMS Medical Director or designee of an ALS EMS Provider that responds to unscheduled 9-1-1 requests in a PSA in Hennepin County.

2.6. **West MRCC:** West Medical Resource Control Center, located at Hennepin County ambulance dispatch center, serves as a communication and data hub between EMS and hospitals. West MRCC tracks ambulance transports to west metro hospitals, relays patient information, facilitates medical control communications, and manages patient tracking and dispositions during emergency incidents.

3. MNTrac Hospital Resource Tracking System

The internet-based hospital resource tracking system used in the metropolitan region for entering and monitoring hospital open and closed status and for reporting Mass Casualty Incidents (MCI) and National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) bed availability. All hospitals and stand-alone ED’s in Hennepin County are required to utilize MNTrac to request a Full Closed status.

Notifications for EMS to transport patients to the closest hospital will also be communicated via MNTrac unless it is unavailable.

4. EMS to Closest Hospital Status

Heavy snow, ice storms, tornadoes, civil unrest or other unusual conditions may prevent ambulance crews from transporting patients to their hospital of choice.

4.1 The Ambulance Provider’s supervisor will initially authorize ambulance crews to transport patients to the closest appropriate hospital or stand-alone ED, which may result in diverting patients to a different hospital from the intended destination.

4.2 The West MRCC dispatcher will consult with an on-call System Medical Director, if needed, to initiate, continue, or end a Closest Hospital Notification in MNTrac.

4.3 The West MRCC dispatcher will notify Ambulance Providers and hospitals via MNTrac regarding Closest Hospital Notifications (or by phone if there is a MNTrac failure). The nature and scope of the event will be included in the notification.

4.4 The West MRCC dispatcher will notify hospitals and Ambulance Providers via MNTrac (or by phone if there is a MNTrac failure) when the event has concluded.

5. Hospital/Stand Alone ED Full Closed to EMS Status

Hospitals or stand-alone ED’s may elect to move to Full Closed status in MNTrac, which indicates the facility cannot accept any ambulance transports or transfers when the facility experiences a physical plant failure,

security lockdown (including in triage area) for an extended period of time; or other unexpected conditions that would significantly impact the quality of care that can be provided to incoming patients.

6. Procedure for Hospitals and Stand Alone EDs When Full Closed to EMS

When a Hennepin County EMS west metro system medical control hospital or stand-alone ED elects to close to all EMS patients, the following procedure will be used:

6.1 Hospital/Stand Alone ED Responsibility

6.1.1 - A hospital or stand-alone ED administrator (vice-president level or above, or the designee of such person) will approve the hospital or stand-alone ED Full Closed status.

6.1.2. The authorized person from the hospital or stand-alone ED shall call the West MRCC dispatcher at (612) 347-2123 to notify EMS of request Full Closed status.

6.1.3. The hospital or stand-alone ED will contact West MRCC to conclude the Full Closed status when the situation at the facility has been resolved.

6.2 West MRCC Responsibility

When notified via MNTrac or directly that a hospital or stand-alone ED has changed its status to Full Closed, the West MRCC dispatcher will:

6.2.1 Ensure that Hennepin County EMS west metro system hospitals and stand-alone EDs use status designations in MNTrac that are consistent with this EMS Council policy and will override any status changes that are not allowed by this policy.

6.2.2 Change the requesting hospital or stand-alone ED's MNTrac status to Full Closed.

6.2.3 If there is a MNTrac failure, notify ambulance dispatch centers of the Full Closed status.

6.2.4 If the hospital or stand-alone ED does not contact the hospital, West MRCC will check the closed facility's status every four hours to verify that the Full Closed status should be extended.

6.2.5 The MRCC dispatcher will change the hospital or stand-alone ED's status in MNTrac to Open when the hospital or stand-alone ED requests the conclusion of its Full Closed status or West MRCC identifies that the situation is resolved.

6.3 EMS Providers' Responsibility

6.3.1 The Ambulance Provider's dispatcher will notify all in-service ambulances of any closed hospital(s) or stand-alone EDs.

6.3.2 Any ambulance transporting a patient at the time a Full Closed status is declared will divert to an appropriate alternative hospital or stand-alone ED.

6.3.3 Ambulance Providers will monitor MNTrac to facilitate notifications of hospital status changes to their crews.

6.3.4 (s) The Ambulance Provider's dispatcher will notify all in-service ambulances when a hospital or stand-alone ED re-opens.

6.3.5 Ambulance crews should make every attempt to contact the receiving facility via West MRCC as soon as possible if they must transport a patient to a hospital or stand-alone ED that is on Full Closed status.

6.3.6 If a hospital or stand-alone ED is closed when the ambulance arrives, ambulance service personnel can request that the patient be evaluated prior to transfer to prevent an EMTALA violation.

6. System Medical Director Responsibility

A System Medical Director will be available to consult with the West MRCC dispatcher, hospital personnel, ambulance providers, or public safety, whenever there is a question regarding a hospital or stand-alone ED closure or an unusual incident or condition affecting patient dispositions.

7. Multiple Medical Control Hospitals Closed to EMS

Multiple hospitals or stand-alone EDs will be allowed to be on Full Closed status until the situation has resolved. When needed, the System Medical Director will be consulted.

If there is a MNTrac failure, West MRCC will contact ambulance dispatch centers regarding diversion and closure status changes.

NOTE: If West MRCC has concerns regarding closed medical control hospitals or stand-alone ED's throughout the metro area, any combination of closings felt to be detrimental to the system, or any change to normal transport conditions, a System Medical Director should be contacted to determine the appropriate system response. A System Medical Director can be reached by calling West MRCC at (612) 347-2123.