EMS Standard Operating Procedures

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<th>Policy Title:</th>
<th>UPH- Inclement Weather Response</th>
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<td>Adoption Date:</td>
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Purpose:
During periods of inclement weather this Standard Operating Guideline should be followed in the decision making process to foster safety for the crew, patient, and other personnel that may be accompanying on the trip.

Weather Monitoring:

1. It shall be the responsibility of EMS crews to monitor weather conditions throughout the day if inclement weather exists, is expected, or has the potential to develop.

2. The EMS Lieutenant will make determinations as to road & weather conditions effecting patient transports.

Transport Decision Making:

1. Decisions to transport patients both in town and out of town should be a collective decision between the EMS Crew and the EMS Shift Supervisor/Command Staff, taking into consideration the weather and road conditions.

2. Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) road conditions and recommendations should be utilized in making determinations for patient transports particularly those involving rural areas. Other resources should also be used to determine weather and conditions.
Road Condition Guidelines for Non-911 Transports:

- **Green** - Normal Driving Conditions, safe for transport
- **Yellow** - Partially Covered roadways, transport may be difficult
- **Orange** - Mostly Covered roadways, transport may be difficult
- **Purple** - Completely Covered roadway, transport difficult; consider allowing time for conditions to improve; consider experience of crew members
- **Red** - Travel Not Advised, transport is not safe and transports should be delayed

For current road conditions during inclement weather the following link may be used:

http://www.iowaroadconditions.org/roadConditions.asp?area=IA_statewide&textOnly=False

**Stranded Ambulance:**

1. Should an EMS unit become stranded or not be able to reach their intended facility while on a transport, it may be necessary to utilize mutual aid to get the patient to an appropriate facility. In the event that the crew cannot reach their intended destination it may be necessary to divert to another facility.

2. If a road conditions deteriorate on the way to a patient at another facility or the crew is unable to make it back to the Des Moines metro area and road conditions are not anticipated to improve it may be necessary to find lodging until the roads improve and travel is safe. Appropriate lodging and food shall be provided at the approval of the EMS Shift Supervisor.

3. The EMS Shift Supervisor should be informed of any diversion or incident that is encountered during a transport.

4. Consideration should be given to utilizing IDOT plows to assist if a patient is in the ambulance and other options are not available.

**Transport Suspension:**

1. It may be necessary to suspend all non-911 related transports to allow road conditions or conditions related to thunderstorms, high winds or other inclement weather conditions to improve for safe travel. This shall be a collective decision made by EMS Shift Supervisor and Crew on duty.
2. The roads shall be monitored to determine when it is safe to resume in town and out of town transports.

**Emergent Requests**

There may be situations where the transport of a patient or the transport of a specialty crew to a patient may make the difference between life and death for a patient or that patient having a productive life. These situations will need to be considered on a case by case basis with consultation of EMS Command Staff. Options that may be considered include the following.

1. Transport of a specialty team and/or equipment via 4 wheel drive supervisory vehicle to the patient location. Transport via ambulance would then take place once the weather and road conditions allow.

2. Coordination with the Iowa Department of Transportation for a snow plow escort. 515-233-7900. (This is an emergency number that is not available to the public. Only supervisors or Westcom Dispatch Center should use this number)

3. Coordination with the State EOC in a major storm situation with the possible use of the Iowa National Guard.

Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management Division
7105 NW 70th Ave, Camp Dodge
Building W-4
Johnston, Iowa 50131
(515) 725-3231
(515) 281-3260 FAX
[www.iowahomelandsecurity.org](http://www.iowahomelandsecurity.org)

**Safety:**

1. A crew member or transport nurse is allowed to call a “Time Out” to allow for re-evaluation of the request for transport. The request for transport will then be re-evaluated by those involved in the transport and the EMS Lieutenant or Medic-in-Charge.

2. During periods of inclement weather, EMS Crews should make take extra safety precautions and ensure the following:

   - EMS unit fuel tanks are full prior to departing on the transport.
   - Crew members have adequate clothing for winter travel.
   - Adequate blankets are available for patient warmth
   - A winter survival kit is present
   - A supply of water and nourishment is available.

**Pediatric Ambulance 124 (vehicle 577)**
The Pediatric Ambulance offers some distinct advantages and disadvantages during winter driving conditions. While its larger size and heavier weight may cause it to be more difficult to operate in adverse winter weather conditions, its heavier frame, ability to carry two patients and its ability to function self-contained are also advantages.

**Special Considerations**

In icy road conditions, caution should be used when using the engine brake. It may be needed to turn the engine brake off completely when icy road conditions are present to prevent loss of control.

- The Pediatric Ambulance is equipped with anti-lock brakes. Pumping of the brakes when sliding on ice should be avoided. The anti-lock brake system will engage if necessary when the brakes are depressed.
- The height of this vehicle is a few feet higher than our other ambulances. This may cause additional handling problems in high wind and ice conditions.
- The size of the vehicle may be an advantage in patient and crew safety if it is struck by another vehicle.
- The weight of the vehicle may provide better traction.
- If it became necessary during a transport to suspend transport due to weather, the pediatric ambulance is much better equipped to be self-contained for long periods of time. The double fuel tanks, auxiliary generator, auxiliary heat and double cots would all be advantageous if we were stranded with a neonate etc...
- The experience level and comfort level of the crew with operation of the pediatric ambulance should also be taken into consideration.
- The number of patients. Consider if it is safer to take one ambulance for two patients versus the possibility of having to send two ambulances.

The decision making process as to whether or not the pediatric ambulance should be used in certain weather will ultimately be decided by the shift supervisor with consultation from the crew.