



NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

Department of EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

TOPIC: Cellular Phone & Camera Use	SOG #: 2.20
Status: ACTIVE	Written: 01/25/2013
Written by: Hollye B. Carpenter	Revised:
Approved by: Hollye B. Carpenter	Adopted: 03/10/2014

PURPOSE

To prevent distractions in the workplace and help ensure the safety and privacy of all personnel and the patients we serve.

SCOPE

All members of the Northampton County Department of EMS (NCEMS)

CONTENT

Cellular phone use and use of personal digital assistants (PDAs) while on duty shall be limited to necessary work-related calls and business. Personal use of cellular phones – whether personal or company-issued – is only permitted during limited times when work responsibilities are not being performed. Use of personal cameras – whether cell phone cameras, stand-alone cameras, or cameras contained on any other such personal devices – whether digital or conventional film cameras – while on duty or when performing any patient care functions for or on behalf of NCEMS – is strictly prohibited without the proper authorization of a Supervisor.

I. Cellular Telephone Use.

- a) Cellular telephones are permitted to be carried while on duty, but must be placed on silent mode, and allow voice mail to answer the call when actively involved in a call.
- b) Messages may be checked on “down time” when not actively involved in a call or about to perform or in the process of performing work duties.
- c) All cellular phones must be “intrinsically safe” consistent with the national standards for portable electronic equipment (such as portable radios) carried by emergency service personnel into hazardous environments, and be carried in a safe and concealed area on the person that does not interfere with the physical requirements of the job, will not fall off, or cause others to be distracted by the presence or appearance of the device.
- d) Cellular phones may be used for personal purposes only on a very limited basis, and conversations shall be limited to fifteen (15) minutes.
- e) Cellular phone use must never be cause for delay in responding to a patient or beginning an assignment, and should not be used for “personal business” while completing an assignment.
- f) Personnel are prohibited from checking/sending text messages, checking electronic mail or internet activities while operating an emergency vehicle.
- g) While attending to a patient or while operating a county vehicle in emergency mode, personnel shall not, under any circumstances, respond to (or make) a personal cellular telephone call, send text messages, or check electronic mail on PDAs or other such devices.



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- h) Personnel are prohibited, ***except in the cases listed below***, from using cellular telephones or PDAs between the dispatch of a call and the time that the call is cleared. This is to prevent any distractions while engaged in patient care, and to avoid any possible interference with equipment that may occur based upon the cellular activity. Example: Use of a cellular phone is prohibited while at the hospital and while getting the unit ready to respond or while completing necessary paperwork. But once all post-run activities at the hospital are completed and the unit is back in service, the cellular phone may be used if necessary in an appropriate location as long as the use does not delay movement of the vehicle back to base or to the next assignment.
- i) Examples of cases where a cellular phone or PDA may be used in the course of duty:
- To locate a call utilizing GPS.
 - To contact the receiving facility with patient information. This will be a permitted time to use the cellular phone in the presence of a patient.
 - To contact Rescue Dispatch for pertinent scene or patient information.
 - To contact a Duty Supervisor for a pertinent work related issue.
 - Any other situation deemed "work related".

II. Camera Use.

- j) No picture taking device including cellular phones, personal electronic devices, PDA's, cameras, or other personal computers (not issued or authorized by the NCEMS for patient care purposes) shall be used by personnel while on the scene of a call without proper authorization of a Supervisor.
- k) Personnel are permitted to use cameras or other picture taking or image generating devices authorized and issued by the NCEMS while on duty. The company issued devices are intended to be used for medical purposes only such as to document the position of vehicles and patients at the scene of an accident or to document mechanism of injury for use by the receiving facility to assist in guiding treatment.
- l) All on-scene photography shall be for clinical and/or documentation purposes only and conducted only at the direction of NCEMS personnel in charge at the scene or by medical command.
- e) Any photographs containing individually identifiable information are covered by the HIPAA Privacy Rule and must be protected in the same manner as patient care reports and other such documentation
- f) Any on-scene images and any other images taken, while on duty, by an employee in the course and scope of their employment are solely the property of NCEMS and *not* the property of the individual staff member. This includes any image inadvertently taken with a staff member's personally owned cellular phone camera or other digital imaging device.
- g) No images taken by an employee in the course and scope of their employment may be used, printed, copied, scanned, e-mailed, posted, shared or distributed in any manner without the express, written approval of NCEMS's Privacy Officer. Example: This prohibition includes posting photos on personal web sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, or on other public safety agency web sites, or e-mailing images to friends, colleagues or others in the EMS industry.