



SC EMS Association

September 29, 2021

****For immediate release****

Joint Position Statement on Hospital Surge Capacity and EMS Diversion

The recent increases in the spread of the delta variant of the coronavirus have created hardships on all aspects of the South Carolina Healthcare landscape. Workforce shortages in hospital systems, primary care, and prehospital markets are further exacerbating the surge in demand for acute care services.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) recognizes the need to decompress hospital capacity as well as the role EMS plays in delivering patients to hospitals that are already at or near capacity. Diversion remains a difficult tactic for our healthcare systems. EMS systems are encouraged to honor hospital diversion requests when possible; however, there are situations in which EMS flexibility is not possible. Factors such as time-sensitive emergencies, availability of EMS assets, or critical patients in need of immediate intervention may require transport to the closest appropriate facility regardless of diversion status.

There is no one-size-fits-all response to this dynamically complex issue. The South Carolina Hospital Association, Department of Health and Environmental Control, and South Carolina EMS Association are working diligently to maintain open communication and coordination to help mitigate this extraordinary increase in patient volume across our state. The ultimate goal is always to do what is best for our patients. We are exploring options that include patient education on appropriate EMS and ED utilization, alternate transport option, as well as treatment in place, but these solutions are not an immediate fix.

In closing, local partnerships and innovation will be necessary to ensure we are able to meet our demands for service. We are available to help facilitate conversations and help coordinate resources as needed. Thank you all for your dedication and service.

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