

Big Tree Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.
Standard Operating Guideline

Actions to Follow When Patients Refuse Care

Revised September 4, 2002

Purpose:

Adult patients who are deemed to be of sound mind (e.g., not under the influence of drugs or alcohol, not hypoglycemic, etc.) have the right to refuse care once the risks of doing so have been explained to them. Patient refusals account for a high number of patients encountered by EMS. In addition, refusals constitute over 90% of the lawsuits filed against EMS agencies. This policy outlines the steps to be taken when an adult patient refuses care. It attempts to standardize the steps taken by EMS providers to reduce liability and protect patients.

Policy:

When an EMS provider is confronted with a patient who refuses treatment and/or transportation, the following procedures shall be followed:

- 1) Explain to the patient what may be wrong with them and what the consequences might be if they don't seek medical attention.
- 2) Obtain a complete set of vital signs [pulse, respiration and blood pressure]. If the patient refuses to allow you take them, document the patient's refusal on the NYS PCR.
- 3) If the patient still refuses medical treatment/transport after you have explained your concerns, have the patient sign the WREMS Refusal of Treatment Form (Attachment X). Have a witness (preferably someone other than a crew member – e.g., police officer) sign the refusal form as a witness.
- 4) Fill in the disposition code boxes on the bottom of the PCR with "005" (refused medical treatment and transport).
- 5) Contact Hamburg Fire Control and inform the dispatcher that the patient refused treatment and/or transportation.

In the event that a patient is not deemed to be competent to make an informed decision (i.e., under the influence of drugs or alcohol, hypoxic, mentally disturbed, etc.), discuss the circumstances with the police and request that the patient be placed on "papers" and forced to go to the hospital. If the police refuse to commit the patient for treatment, document so on the NYS PCR. At any time, medical control can be contacted to aid in the determination of mental capacity and the need for medical treatment/hospitalization.