



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Office of Emergency Medical Services
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EMERGENCY WAIVER

TO: All Licensed Ambulance Services
FROM: Mark J. Miller, Director, Office of Emergency Medical Services
RE: Weather-Related Waiver for Transport to Alternate Destinations
DATE: January 18, 2019

The first significant snowstorm of 2019 will be affecting Massachusetts beginning Saturday January 19, 2019 and into Sunday, January 20, 2019. Heavy snow, freezing rain, intense cold and potential high winds are anticipated to affect multiple regions and citizens of the Commonwealth. Therefore, under the authority of the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 111C, §22, certain provisions of the Emergency Medical Services System Regulations, 105 CMR 170.000, have been suspended through this waiver.

The purpose of this waiver is to facilitate transportation of individuals who have contacted the 911 system in order to access transportation to an alternate destination, defined for this waiver as an American Red Cross (or similar) shelter, homeless shelter or community warming center, in response to weather conditions and reported power outages that may endanger their health or safety. Alternate destinations must be notified that EMS may be transporting individuals who have called 911 to their locations, and be prepared to accept such individuals.

Term of the Suspension:

This order shall be effective:

From: 8pm, Saturday, January 19, 2019

To: 5PM, Monday, January 21, 2019

Effective section: 105 CMR 170.020 Definitions

“Appropriate Health Care Facility” shall mean:

An emergency department, either physically located within an acute care hospital license by the Department pursuant to 105 CMR 130.000 to provide emergency services, or in a satellite emergency facility approved by the Department pursuant to 130.821 or an alternate destination, in accordance with the guidelines for transporting individuals to alternate destinations below, that is closest geographically or conforms to a Department-approved point of entry plan.

Conditions:

- The suspension of the appropriate destination requirements will only apply to Massachusetts ambulance services, licensed at any level, BLS or ALS, in EMS Regions I, II, III, IV and V that are affected by the severe weather conditions.

- The suspension **does not preclude ambulance services affected by the weather conditions from transporting patients to the most appropriate setting of care, including acute care hospitals when necessary.**
- The suspension will also be relevant to any ambulance service from outside of the effected regions that are called upon to assist in transportation in the affected areas.

Guidelines for Transporting Individuals to Alternate Destinations:

- Individuals must not have an acute chief complaint that requires emergency medical care.
- Individuals must have normal mental status (or baseline per knowledgeable observer).
- Normal (or baseline) vital signs.
- A **patient care report must be completed** for each individual transported to an alternate destination.
- Crews must ensure that patients bring any needed medications or equipment with them.
- Transportation in an ambulance to an alternate destination will be permitted when no other means of transportation, such as “wheelchair vans,” buses or other community resources are available.
- Substitute transportation, such as wheelchair vans, buses and other community resources, should be utilized according to the individual’s circumstances and transportation needs.

Contact information

In the event that you may need further information or an update on this waiver, you may contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Duty Officer at 617-339-8351. You may also contact Mark Miller at Mark.J.Miller@state.ma.us .

Thank you.