

<b>Guideline Name:</b> Continuity of EMS Operations		<b>Department:</b> Orange County Emergency Services
<b>Effective Date:</b> May 31, 2025	<b>Revised Date:</b> May 23, 2025	<b>Approval(s):</b>  Kim Woodward, EMS Division Chief

**Scope**

This policy applies to all EMS Battalion Chiefs and/or EMS Relief Battalion Chiefs responsible for staffing decisions and resource allocation.

**Purpose**

This policy establishes guidelines for EMS unit staffing, including primary and secondary unit assignments, minimum staffing requirements, and procedures for temporarily deactivating or adjusting unit status during short-term staffing shortages ensuring adequate service coverage and response efficiency.

**Definitions**

**Deactivation** – taking an ambulance out of service due to unavailable resources (staffing, equipment, vehicle)

**Reduction** - taking an ALS ambulance to BLS status due to unavailable resources (staffing or equipment)

**Not available status** - may pertain to mechanical, Scheduled preventative maintenance, special assignment, or on an active 911 call for service

**Decompression**- temporary district reassignment to move evenly distribute call volume

**On duty Battalion Chief** – pertains to Battalion Chiefs and Relief Battalion Chiefs on active-duty assignment

**Guidance**

I. **Minimum Staffing Requirement**

- a. A minimum of five (5) ALS units must remain operational at all times to maintain adequate EMS response capability.
  - i. If staffing falls below the required ALS minimum, the EMS Battalion Chief must notify the EMS Deputy Chief or EMS Division Chief immediately
  - ii. The EMS Deputy Chief or Division Chief shall issue directions to mitigate the inadequate staffing levels by reassigning one Battalion Chief to an ALS unit to maintain minimum staffing in accordance with this policy.

II. **Primary Units**

- a. The following units provide essential Advanced Life Support (ALS) coverage and must be prioritized in staffing allocations:
  - 1. Medic 1 - 0600-0600

2. Medic 2 - 0600-0600 (24-hour unit operating in split 12-hour shifts on a 2/3 schedule)
3. Medic 3 - 0600-0600
4. Medic 4 - 0600-0600
5. Medic 6 – 0600-0600

II. **Secondary Units**

- a. These units provide additional ALS coverage and one or more may be subject to temporary deactivation or reduction to Basic Life Support (BLS) status based on staffing availability as long as minimum staffing requirements are met:
  1. Medic 9 - 1000-2200
  2. Medic 8 - 0800-2000
  3. Medic 5 - 0600-0600

III. **Unit Deactivation/Reduction Status Protocol**

- a. In the event of a short-term staffing shortage, the following protocol shall be followed for unit deactivation or reduction to Basic Life Support (BLS) status (in this order):
  1. Medic 9
  2. Medic 8
  3. Medic 5
- b. EMS Battalion Chiefs shall assess staffing levels at the beginning of each shift and implement deactivation or reduction, as outlined in this document.

IV. **Northside Decompression**

- a. Medic 9 is the primary Northside decompression unit. Whenever two northside units are not in an available status, the decompression unit shall move to Station 4 (NOT EMS Station 5 or EMS Station 1).
  1. Assignment of the response station for the decompression ambulance shall be the responsibility of the Battalion Chief. The Battalion Chief will estimate the station most likely to be vacated by the primary response ambulance the longest.
  2. Early Clearance: The decompression unit may clear the move-up early only at the discretion of the on-duty Battalion Chief.

V. **South Side Decompression**

- a. Medic 8 is the primary Southside decompression unit. Whenever two southside units are not in an available status, the decompression unit shall move to either EMS Station 2 or EMS Station 3 (Not EMS Station 6).
  1. Positioning: The decompression unit will position their ambulance inside the designated EMS bay of the assigned station.
  2. Duration: The decompression unit shall remain in the district for one (1) hour after either of the two southside units clears their call.
  3. Early Clearance: The decompression unit may clear the move-up early only at the discretion of the on-duty Battalion Chief.

VI. End of Tour

- a. No unit shall mark unavailable without the approval from the on-duty Battalion Chief.

- b. Any ambulance, based on system need and Battalion Chief discretion, may be held for up to three hours.