



EMS Information Bulletin 2012-010

DATE: July 15, 2012

SUBJECT: Medication Shortages

TO: EMS Agencies, Regional EMS Councils, Medical Command Facilities

FROM: Bureau of Emergency Medical Services
PA Department of Health
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Background

In the past few years, emergency medical services (EMS) providers have periodically dealt with national or regional shortages of medications and supplies needed to provide emergency care.

Process

Pennsylvania Bulletin [42 Pa.B. 4229][Saturday, July 07, 2012] establishes the medications that an EMS Agency may carry on an ALS ambulance for use by an ALS provider. The medication and the amount that must be carried on an ALS ambulance is based on the statewide ALS protocols adopted by the Regional EMS Councils. The Bureau is aware that some of the drugs listed in the Pennsylvania Bulletin may periodically be in limited supply due to national or regional shortages.

If an EMS agency has an issue obtaining the meds, it is recommended that the agency should contact multiple vendors, develop a plan to use expiring medications first, and planning ahead in ordering the amount of medications that they anticipate using.

If EMS Agencies continue to have difficulty meeting the requirement, they should notify their region well before they run out of medication or it expires. If the regions exhaust their resources in assisting the agency to obtain the medication, then the region will notify the BEMS, and the Bureau can assist with a solution or provide a waiver of the requirement to carry the medication or a waiver to use a substitute medication. The Bureau will review the method proposed by the EMS Agency to address the shortage to ensure that the health and safety of the public is protected.

Documentation of good-faith effort to obtain a required agent:

EMS Agencies should provide the following information to their Council:

- Contact information, including date of contact, for three sources through which the EMS Agency attempted to obtain the medication. The sources can be distributors, other health

care providers, or any other reseller that could reasonably be expected to be able to legally sell pharmaceuticals to the EMS Agency.

- Instructions issued to ALS providers indicating an alternative medication, formulation, or concentration, from the list published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, to be used in place of the currently used medication.
- Printed and dated name and signature of the EMS Agency medical director.

Early notification of potential shortages has resulted in many EMS Agencies being able to avoid shortages of critical medications and supplies. EMS Agencies should develop plans for dealing with potential shortages. This should include establishing relationships with multiple vendors and medical command facilities. Councils should consider using their council structure to provide early notification for shortages and alternative sources of medications or supplies. Regions should keep their regional medical director and the regional Medical Advisory Committee current regarding shortages and strategies being used to address this issue.