



# Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service

## Division of Operations

### Emergency Medical and Integrated Healthcare Services

Over the last three weeks, Covid admissions have risen dramatically at area hospitals. This has impacted the ability of some county EDs to admit new patients. The situation is compounded by an increase in both ED walk-in and ambulance PUI patients. All this can all lead to slower hospital throughput which can trickle down to us and cause an increase in turnover times.

We are monitoring the situation closely. While we've had a couple of blue alert periods and some extended turnover times, our hospital partners have done an incredible job getting our patients transferred and turnover times remain manageable. Should we experience a sustained or otherwise unmanageable increase in turnover times, we plan to add an additional EMS Duty Officer to function as EMS700 to direct transport destinations on 7L and we'll be on blue alert around the clock.

For your safety and for system efficiencies:

- The practice of holding a PUI patient in the back of a transport unit for an extended period of time while waiting to transfer care is unacceptable. For your safety, all patients receiving aerosol-generating procedures should be moved out of the EMS unit immediately upon arrival at your destination. For other PUI patients, a brief waiting period may be tolerable after consideration of potential risk to clinicians. ED personnel have been advised against this practice so this shouldn't be a surprise to them.
- The practice of sending the driver into to the ED to obtain a bed assignment is inefficient. ED personnel often want specific patient information which the driver rarely has; they have been advised to use the radio to obtain patient information.
- Please contact the EMS Duty Officer should the turnover time exceed or be anticipated to exceed 30 minutes on any individual case.
- Consider Direct-To-Triage for low acuity patients who can sit in a chair.

We thank you for your professionalism and flexibility during this upswing of PUI patient encounters.