pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

EMS Information Bulletin- #060

DATE: October 27, 2008

SUBJECT: Continuous Positive Airway Pressure for Basic Life Support

TO: Pennsylvania EMS Organizations & Personnel

FROM: Bureau of Emergency Medical Services
PA Department of Health
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The Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (EMS), in cooperation with the Emergency Health Services Federation (EHSF), conducted a pilot study on the use of Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) in the EHSF's region. As a result of a successful pilot study, the CPAP for Basic Life Support (BLS) Program is being implemented statewide.

For the pilot study, the EHSF located each Advanced Life Support (ALS) station within their region, plotted it on a map and then identified a 15-minute drive time. Each BLS unit was then layered over the map and any BLS unit outside of the 15 minute drive time was requested to participate in the pilot study.

The Statewide BLS Protocols are written to allow an EMT who has the appropriate training, is working with an ambulance service that meets the requirements of the CPAP program, and who has the approval of the ambulance service medical director to administer CPAP in accordance with the BLS Protocols or medical command orders. The Department of Health, Bureau of EMS, pursuant to the EMS Act (35 P.S. § 6924), has the responsibility and authority to guide and coordinate the development of emergency medical programs into a unified Statewide system. Therefore, recognizing the importance of CPAP to an effective EMS system, the Bureau of EMS is issuing the following requirements for ambulance services that wish to participate in the CPAP for BLS Program.

Regional EMS Council Requirement:

The Regional EMS Council must have a process in place to review utilization of CPAP by BLS/ALS services.

Ambulance Service Requirements:

Each ambulance service must meet the following requirements prior to the implementation of CPAP for BLS:

1. Identification of a medical director willing to serve in an oversight capacity in regards to the CPAP.
2. Ability to comply with Statewide BLS Protocols.
3. Maintain CPAP masks/devices adequate to treat one patient with CPAP.
4. Carry a CPAP device that has a manometer (or other means to provide specific CPAP pressure) and meets any other specifications required by the Department of Health.
5. Be approved to carry a pulse oximeter.
6. The service medical director must oversee the CPAP training, use of CPAP, and quality improvement audits.

EMS Practitioner Requirements:

Each EMS Practitioner must meet the following requirements prior to using CPAP for BLS:

1. The CPAP for BLS skill may only be used when an EMT is working with an ambulance service that complies with Department of Health requirements for carrying CPAP.
2. Only an EMT that has completed the CPAP for BLS Training Module may use the CPAP for BLS skill.
3. An EMT must be authorized to perform the CPAP for BLS skill by the ambulance service medical director.

Attachments:

1. CPAP for BLS Statewide Protocol
2. CPAP for BLS Training Module
3. CPAP Program Data Record