

Joint Policy Regarding Restraint of Uncooperative Patients

Scope: Sacramento Fire Department
Sacramento Police Department

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Table of Contents

A. Principles	2
B. Authority.....	3
C. Policy.....	3
1) Response to Uncooperative Patients	3
2) Restraint of Uncooperative Patients	4
3) Transportation of Restrained Patients	5
4) Documentation of Applied Restraints	5
D. Joint Policy.....	6
Department Head Review and Acknowledgement	7

Supersedes:

N/A - NEW

Reviewed/Effective:

08/29/2025

A. Principles

- 1) Patient safety and the safety of responding City personnel and the general public are of paramount importance when the City provides emergency medical care and/or transport to an individual who receives medical service and/or transport.
- 2) Fire personnel are required to respond to all calls requesting emergency medical service regardless of the nature of the call.
- 3) The Fire Department may, on occasion, respond to calls requesting medical service wherein the patient is exhibiting behavior and or actions which the Fire Department deems unsafe for fire personnel to conduct an adequate patient assessment or where the Fire Department may be actively engaged in conducting a patient assessment, but the patient suddenly and unexpectedly displays behaviors or actions in which the Fire Department deems unsafe for Fire Department personnel to remain in close patient contact. A patient who exhibits such behavior or actions which leads the Fire Department to deem a scene unsafe shall hereinafter be referred to as an “uncooperative patient.”
- 4) At no time are fire personnel obligated to conduct or continue to perform a patient assessment when the Fire Department personnel have deemed that the patient is an “uncooperative patient” or that the scene is “unsafe”.
- 5) In order to properly assess a patient’s condition and/or provide emergency medical care, fire personnel may be required to temporarily restrain an uncooperative patient to administer treatment and ensure the patient’s safety, the safety of fire personnel, and the general public. In these situations, fire personnel shall follow established Sacramento County Emergency Medical Services Agency (SCEMSA) policy regarding engagement, assessment, and restraint.
- 6) Any restraint applied by fire personnel will be for the purposes of administering treatment and ensuring a patient’s safety only and is not intended to be a show of force or authority by the City of Sacramento or the Sacramento Fire Department.
- 7) Fire personnel are not expected to subdue an uncooperative patient who is suspected of possessing a weapon, is suspected of committing a crime, or is being placed on a 5150 hold.
- 8) If the City determines that fire personnel require additional training to temporarily restrain uncooperative patients for the purpose of administering treatment and ensuring the patient’s safety as described in this Policy and applicable SCEMSA policies, the City will provide that training. This may include refresher training or training on new equipment or work practices.
- 9) The City will continue to explore and evaluate potential alternative interventions, such as by crisis intervention teams, to aid the Fire Department and law enforcement personnel in responding to situations involving uncooperative patients.

B. Authority

- 1) [California Health and Safety Code section 1797.220](#)
- 2) [County of Sacramento Emergency Medical Services Agency, Document Number 8062](#)
- 3) [County of Sacramento Emergency Medical Services Agency, Document Number 2305](#)
- 4) [Sacramento County Emergency Medical Services Agency \(SCEMSA\) Emergency Policy Memorandum Regarding Policy 8062.11 – Behavioral Crisis/Restraint](#), dated March 13, 2025
- 5) [California Penal Code Section 835a](#)
- 6) [California Penal Code section 836](#)
- 7) [U.S. Const., amend. IV](#)
- 8) [U.S. Const., amend. XIV](#)
- 9) [California Welfare and Institutions Code section 5150](#)

C. Policy

1) Response to Uncooperative Patients

a. Response by Fire Department Personnel

- i. In a situation involving an “uncooperative patient”, in the interest of the safety of fire personnel, fire personnel may choose to refrain from conducting a patient assessment or, if a patient assessment has already commenced, remove themselves from the patient and retreat to a safe area for the purpose of contacting law enforcement personnel to request that law enforcement personnel respond to the scene.
- ii. To the extent possible and as outlined in [SCEMSA Policy No. 8062](#), fire personnel shall request law enforcement assistance if fire personnel deem a patient an “uncooperative patient” or a scene “unsafe” such that conducting or continuing a patient assessment may be unsafe to fire personnel.
- iii. In the event that fire personnel request law enforcement personnel respond to a scene, the two agencies will make every effort to determine an appropriate response to the specific situation through or by communication between the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) Watch Commander and Sacramento Fire Department (SFD) Battalion Chief.
- iv. If law enforcement personnel do not respond to a scene after fire personnel request their response, fire personnel shall document the non-response as outlined in section (C)(4) of this Policy. Under such a circumstance, fire

personnel shall follow SCEMSA policies on disengagement and engagement, including the procedures outlined in [SCEMSA Emergency Policy Memorandum Regarding Policy 8062.11 – Behavioral Crisis/Restraint](#), dated March 13, 2025.

- v. When the uncooperative patient is a minor, fire personnel shall adhere to the SCEMSA protocols. Fire personnel shall engage the County of Sacramento Department of Child, Family and Adult Services as necessary and appropriate.

b. Response by Law Enforcement Personnel

- i. Under a circumstance in which fire personnel have requested law enforcement personnel assistance as outlined in section C(1)(a)(ii), above, law enforcement personnel shall determine, on the information provided, whether to respond and whether they possess legal authority to restrain the individual.
- ii. Law enforcement personnel shall respond to a SFD request for assistance with an “uncooperative patient” or an “unsafe” scene where permitted by law or SPD policy unless emergency circumstances or staff availability preclude a response by law enforcement personnel. If law enforcement personnel have no lawful authority to legally restrain the individual, refer to section C(1)(a)(iv).
- iii. If law enforcement personnel respond and are legally authorized to restrain the individual, e.g., where the patient is suspected of committing a crime or is being placed on a 5150 hold, law enforcement personnel shall assume primary responsibility for subduing and restraining the patient.
- iv. Law enforcement personnel shall respond to a request for assistance where fire personnel have provided information sufficient for law enforcement personnel to believe a crime has been committed against fire personnel, unless emergency circumstances or staff availability preclude a response by law enforcement personnel.

2) Restraint of Uncooperative Patients

a. Restraint by Fire Department Personnel

- i. Under a circumstance where patient physical restraint is necessary in order to ensure patient and/or Fire personnel safety, Fire personnel will follow the minimum standards set forth in [SCEMSA Policy No. 8062](#), as that policy may be amended.
- ii. Fire personnel shall continuously assess a restrained patient to assure the patient’s condition does not unknowingly deteriorate.

- iii. Fire personnel shall maintain responsibility for the medical wellbeing of a restrained patient, including circumstances where law enforcement personnel assist in the restraint of a patient or apply a mechanical restraint device.

b. Restraint by Law Enforcement Personnel

- i. Law enforcement personnel shall not be responsible for restraining a patient in situations where Fire Department personnel deem a patient an “uncooperative patient,” unless the patient is suspected of having committed a crime or is being placed on a 5150 hold.
- ii. Law enforcement personnel may restrain uncooperative patients only to the extent permitted by applicable law, e.g., where the uncooperative patient is suspected of having committed a crime or is being placed on a 5150 hold.
- iii. Law enforcement personnel shall not apply mechanical restraints to restrain the movement of a patient who is not under arrest, legally detained, or detained for 5150. If law enforcement personnel assist Fire Department personnel in the restraint of a patient or apply a mechanical restraint device, Fire Department personnel shall remain present to assess the patient’s health and vitals as set forth in Section C.2.a.i and ii, above.
- iv. Law enforcement personnel shall remain in the presence of a restrained patient if a restrained patient is under mechanical restraint due to a suspected crime, 5150 hold, or other lawful reason.

3) Transportation of Restrained Patients

- a. Fire personnel will follow SCEMSA policy when transporting restrained patients.
- b. Law enforcement personnel shall accompany a restrained patient in an ambulance if law enforcement applied a restraint device to the patient and it is possible for law enforcement personnel to accompany the restrained patient in an ambulance.
- c. If it is not possible for law enforcement personnel to accompany a restrained patient in an ambulance, law enforcement personnel should follow by driving in tandem with the ambulance on a pre-determined route.
- d. If law enforcement personnel travel in tandem with the ambulance, transport personnel shall communicate with law enforcement personnel prior to departing the scene to ensure a method to inform law enforcement personnel of any problems that may develop during transport.

4) Documentation of Applied Restraints

- a. Fire personnel will document the application of a restraint as required by [SCEMSA Document No. 8062](#) and [SCEMSA Document No. 2305](#).

- b. If Fire Department personnel contact law enforcement personnel, due to a patient being deemed an “uncooperative patient” or a scene being deemed “unsafe,” and law enforcement personnel do not respond to the scene, Fire Department personnel on scene shall document law enforcement personnel’s non-response as required by [SCEMSA Document No. 8062](#).

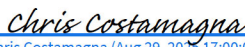
D. Joint Policy

- 1) This Policy reflects a joint agreement between the SFD and the SPD.
- 2) No amendments, modifications, or exceptions to this Policy may be made unilaterally by either department or their respective recognized employee organizations.
- 3) Any revision or update to this Policy must be reviewed, agreed upon, and jointly adopted by the Fire Chief, the Police Chief, and, where applicable, in consultation with the recognized employee organizations representing impacted employees.



Department Head Review and Acknowledgement

JOINT POLICY REGARDING RESTRAINT OF UNCOOPERATIVE PATIENTS


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08/29/2025


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09/03/2025