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*"IF IT DOESN'T SAY BELL ON THE SIDE,
YOU'VE JUST BEEN TAKEN FOR A RIDE!!!"*[®]

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Bell Ambulance EMS Medical Director Medication Expiration Guidelines

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has been greatly affected by nationwide medication shortages¹.

Several critical or potentially life-saving medications utilized by EMS have been unavailable or in very short supply, creating a potentially dangerous environment for patients. Drug shortages have been associated with delays in treatment, increased medication errors, and increased cost. The International Association of Fire Chiefs has issued a position statement detailing the impact of nationwide drug shortages, and calling on EMS leadership to "examine other medically appropriate or approved solutions"².

Ideally, an expired medication would never be utilized for patient care. However, several medications for which there are no readily available substitutions are known to have potency long after their expiration date³. Multiple EMS systems have adopted procedures for use of medications in very short supply in light of this information^{4, 5}.

In response to this National crisis, the Bell Ambulance Medical Director is issuing the following guidelines:

- Approved medications required for treatment of potentially life threatening conditions for which there is no reasonable substitution may be used after their posted expiration date with the following restrictions:
 - Individual medications in short supply should be approved by EMS Medical Director before being used after the expiration date. EMS Agency and Medical Director will maintain a list of medications approved for use after the expiration date. This list will be communicated to the crewmembers of Bell Ambulance on a monthly basis.
 - Expired medications will be used only after supply of non-expired medications has been exhausted.
 - As with any medication (expired or not expired), medications will be visually inspected for the presence of particulate matter and for normal coloration of the solution prior to administration.
- As part of an individual EMS agency's QA Program, the agency will review any expired medication use and should keep a record of use of all expired medications used in the field.



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References

1. Current drug shortages. Retrieved on 9/30/2013 from <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/DrugShortages/ucm050792.htm>
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3. Orange County California EMS Policy regarding medication shortage. Retrieved on 9/30/2013 from <http://www.astho.org/Programs/Preparedness/Coping-With-Drug-Shortages/Orange-County-California-Drug-Shortage-Advisory/>
4. The position statement regarding national drug shortages position paper by the International association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC.org). Retrieved on 9/30/2013 from http://www.iafc.org/files/1ASSOC/Position_NationalDrugShortage.pdf
5. Utah EMS Policy regarding medication shortage. Retrieved on 9/30/2013 from http://health.utah.gov/ems/rulereg/medication_shortage_policy.pdf

Signed:

Dr. Keith Rader
Bell Ambulance Medical Director
June 22, 2017

Jason Flegner
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June 22, 2017

