



UTSW/Parkland BioTel EMS ALERT

May 8, 2018

EMS ALERT 18-003

Appropriate Positioning and Transport of Restrained Patients

Purpose: To remind BioTel EMS Providers of the appropriate and safe way to position and transport patients who have been restrained in order to decrease the likelihood of an adverse event.

Background: EMS Providers frequently transport patients who have been restrained. Some are in custody of law enforcement and have been handcuffed. Others have had soft restraints applied for safety. The following refresher describes the appropriate and safe transport of restrained patients.

Research shows that HEALTHY subjects placed in a prone position with hands restrained behind their back demonstrate multiple cardiorespiratory physiologic abnormalities. AGITATED patients are at further increased risk for positional asphyxia and sudden cardiac death due to additional risk factors (e.g. stimulant drug use, physiologic stress, hyperactivity, hyperthermia, catecholamine hyperstimulation, potential trauma, and metabolic or psychiatric disorders).

Therefore, NEVER restrain or transport patients in the prone position. If a patient is found in such a position, immediately roll him/her onto their side (preferred) or back (e.g. if needed to provide medical care), maintaining spinal motion restriction when indicated.

As a reminder, review the following relevant [UTSW/Parkland BioTel policies](#) (2014-2018 edition):

- Evaluation and Management of a Patient in Custody:
 - 4(c,d,e) – Paramedics should not use handcuffs, and if they are utilized by law enforcement, then law enforcement must ride in the ambulance with the patient
 - 4(f) – A patient shall never be transported in a prone position. A patient shall NEVER be “hogtied”
 - 4 (g) – Restrained patients shall have their cardiorespiratory status CONTINUOUSLY monitored
- Restraint of Patient:
 - 2(d) – If a law enforcement officer applies handcuffs, do not allow the patient to be handcuffed to the stretcher, and the law enforcement officer shall accompany the patient in the ambulance if the handcuffs remain applied
 - 3(b)(iv) – Paramedics must continuously monitor all restrained patients using pulse oximetry, capnography, and the ECG monitor
 - 4(c) – EMS personnel may NOT use prone restraint positioning
 - 4(d) – EMS personnel may NOT restrain a patient in a manner that restricts movement of the abdomen (diaphragm) or chest, either by direct compression or hyperextension of the chest wall

Summary: Restrained patients may ONLY be transported in one of these positions:

- **Sitting upright (up to 90 degrees)**
- **Left lateral recumbent (patient must face the EMS provider in order to monitor the airway and breathing)**
- **Supine (if needed to provide medical care)**

➤ **UTSW/Parkland BioTel EMS Providers may contact BioTel or the [EMS Medical Direction Team](#) at any time with questions or concerns about this EMS Alert**