



San Joaquin County

Emergency Medical Services Agency



<http://www.sjgov.org/ems>

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TO: All Prehospital Personnel and Providers
Base Hospital Personnel
Emergency Department Physicians and Nurse Liaisons

FROM: Richard N. Buys, M.D., Medical Director
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SUBJ.: Patients with Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD)

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The purpose of this Policy Memorandum is to provide information and direction about the care and transport of patients who have a Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD). This device is comprised of a continuous flow pump located inside the patient's thorax that is attached to the left ventricle. A power cable extends from the pump to an external battery pack that is secured in a harness worn by the patient. Patients with an LVAD rely upon these devices for their survival. Field treatment considerations for patients with an LVAD include the following:

- Provide prehospital care to the patient in a manner consistent with ALS and BLS treatment protocols for the patient's condition with the following exceptions:
 - **Do not** perform CPR
 - **Do follow** the directions of the patient's care giver when moving and transporting the patient
- The LVAD replaces the pumping action of the left ventricle using a mechanism that provides continuous blood flow; patients commonly have no discernable peripheral pulse and only a "mean" arterial pressure detectable using a Doppler.
- LVAD patients should be assessed for signs of circulation as an indication of adequate perfusion (capillary refill, skin color, warmth).
- An LVAD patient's ECG heart rate will differ from the pulse rate since the LVAD is not synchronized with the native heart rate.
- The LVAD patient's caregiver is the expert on scene for all issues related to the LVAD device. Prehospital personnel are to follow the directions of the caregiver in all things related to the LVAD device. Always allow the caregiver to accompany the patient in the ambulance or air ambulance patient compartment.
- Expect the caregiver to ask prehospital personnel to speak by phone to the LVAD Program Coordinator at U.C. Davis Medical Center, Stanford Medical Center or other participating LVAD hospital.
- If possible transport LVAD patients directly to their LVAD hospital otherwise contact SJGH for Base Hospital direction regarding patient destination.
- For additional information about LVAD devices go to: www.thoratec.com

Please distribute this Policy Memorandum to all EMS personnel, base hospital personnel and emergency department personnel.