

Denver Metro EMS Physicians Statement on Clinical Management of Prehospital Patients Presenting with Severe Agitation:  
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The specialty of Emergency Medical Services is dedicated to the care of patients in the prehospital environment. As specialty trained EMS physicians, we recognize the importance of caring for patients with time sensitive, life-threatening conditions, including patients experiencing delirium, substance use disorders, mental health crises and severe agitation. It is of the utmost importance that we treat all our patients, regardless of emergency type, with respect and dignity. We are unified and resolute in the following principles:

**Medical emergencies should be handled by medical professionals.** The practice of EMS medicine requires specific initial and ongoing training to National and State standards. These standards ensure our clinicians are appropriately trained. EMTs and paramedics are trained to assess and manage people who are agitated and pose a threat to themselves and others. Paramedics must make the critical determination if a person is experiencing a medical emergency such as psychosis, delirium, severe metabolic derangement or drug toxicity, and if they require interventions to ensure their safety.

**Severe agitation can lead to cardiovascular collapse and death.** Severe agitation is associated with metabolic acidosis, hyperthermia, dehydration, and electrolyte abnormalities which can lead to cardiovascular collapse and death. What was once thought of as solely a psychiatric or behavioral issue is now known to be a medical emergency. Early recognition and treatment of severe agitation is essential. Safe care of these individuals may require the administration of sedating medications to minimize the time spent physically restraining them. The safety and efficacy of medications such as midazolam and droperidol to rapidly sedate severely agitated patients are supported by the medical literature and by vast amounts of clinical experience. The administration of these medications is required to help manage and resuscitate these patients, as well as facilitate their transfer to a higher level of care.

**Trauma Informed Care and patient respect remain at the core of our practice.** Studies have demonstrated that medical management combined with training and practices in trauma informed care is the ideal patient centered approach for patients experiencing delirium or mental health crises. EMTs and paramedics are trained to recognize and understand the complex interactions between patients and emergency services, and respect the potential trauma our patients have experienced or are experiencing during these encounters. They practice verbal de-escalation, alternative team activation, and other practices where appropriate. The care of these patients is multidisciplinary and complex, and as a profession, we are committed to disseminating best practices as they continually evolve.

The Denver Metro EMS Medical Directors are experts on the medical literature and practice of managing agitated patients in the emergency department and prehospital settings. We believe that emergency medical decisions should be based on science and medical expertise.

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