

## **Sample EMS Cellular Phone and Camera Use Policy**

**Purpose:** To prevent distractions in the workplace and help ensure the safety and privacy of all personnel and the patients we serve.

**Policy:** Cellular phone use and use of personal digital assistants (PDAs) while on duty shall be limited to necessary work-related calls made on work-issued phones. Personal use of cell phones – whether personal or company-issued – is only permitted during limited times when work responsibilities are not being performed. Use of personal cameras – whether cell phone cameras, stand-alone cameras, or cameras contained on any other such personal devices – whether digital or conventional film cameras – while on duty or when performing any patient care functions for or on behalf of ABC – is strictly prohibited.

### **Procedure:**

#### **I. Cellular Telephone Use.**

a. Personal cellular telephones are permitted to be carried while on duty, but must be placed on silent mode, and allow voice mail to answer the call. Messages may be checked on “down time” when not actively involved in a call or about to perform or in the process of performing work duties. All personal cell phones must be “intrinsically safe” consistent with the national standards for portable electronic equipment (such as portable radios) carried by emergency service personnel into hazardous environments, and be carried in a safe and concealed area on the person that does not interfere with the physical requirements of the job, will not fall off, or cause others to be distracted by the presence or appearance of the device.

b. Cellular phones may be used for personal purposes only on a very limited basis, and conversations shall be limited to five (5) minutes. Personal cell phone use must never be cause for delay in responding to a patient or beginning an assignment, and should never be used while completing an assignment.

c. While attending to a patient or while operating a Company vehicle or aircraft, personnel shall not, under any circumstances, respond to (or make) a personal cellular telephone call, send text messages, or check electronic mail on PDAs or other such devices. The use of these devices is also at all times prohibited while in any aircraft as a passenger or crew member, or while walking near the aircraft.

d. Personnel are prohibited from using personal cellular telephones or PDAs between the dispatch of a call and the time that the call is cleared. This is to prevent any distractions while engaged in patient care, and to avoid any possible interference with equipment that may occur based upon the cellular activity. Example: Use of a personal cell phone is prohibited while at the hospital and while getting the unit ready to respond or while completing necessary paperwork. But once

all post-run activities at the hospital are completed and the unit is back in service, the personal cell phone may be used if necessary in an appropriate location as long as the use does not delay movement of the vehicle back to base or to the next assignment.

e. All applicable aviation regulations with regard to the use of electronic devices in flight shall be followed at all times.

## **II. Camera Use.**

a. Under no circumstances shall any personnel be permitted to use the camera function of a personal cellular telephone while on duty.

b. Personnel are only permitted to use cameras or other picture taking or image generating devices authorized and issued by ABC while on duty. The company issued devices are intended to be used for medical purposes only such as to document the position of vehicles and patients at the scene of an accident or to document mechanism of injury for use by the receiving facility to assist in guiding treatment. No other picture taking devices including personal electronic devices, PDA's, cameras, or other personal computers (not issued or authorized by ABC for patient care purposes) shall be used by personnel while on duty.

c. All on-scene photography shall be for clinical and/or documentation purposes only and conducted only at the direction of ABC personnel in charge at the scene or by medical command.

d. Any photographs containing individually identifiable information are covered by the HIPAA Privacy Rule and must be protected in the same manner as patient care reports and other such documentation

e. Any on-scene images and any other images taken by an employee in the course and scope of their employment are solely the property of ABC and *not* the property of the individual staff member. This includes any image inadvertently taken with a staff member's personally owned cell phone camera or other digital imaging device.

f. No images taken by an employee in the course and scope of their employment may be used, printed, copied, scanned, e-mailed, posted, shared or distributed in any manner without the express, written approval of ABC's Privacy Officer. Example: This prohibition includes posting photos on personal web sites, such as FaceBook or MySpace, or on other public safety agency web sites, or e-mailing images to friends, colleagues or others in the EMS industry.