



EMS Information Bulletin 2017-19

DATE: Oct. 23,2017

SUBJECT: Potential sterile saline solution shortages

TO: Pennsylvania EMS medical command physicians
Pennsylvania EMS agency medical directors
Pennsylvania EMS agency

FROM: Aaron M. Rhone, EMS program manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'ARhone', is written over the 'FROM:' line.

The Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) was informed of a potential supply shortage of sterile saline solutions and related products. While this has been a national concern since 2014, recent events have exacerbated the situation, including actions taken by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) against a manufacturer, and manufacturing facilities in Puerto Rico being impacted by recent hurricanes.

To address this concern, the Bureau of EMS has consulted with Dr. Douglas Kupas, state EMS medical director and is providing the following guidance:

- 1) Limit intravenous (IV) access to situations where statewide Advanced Life Support (ALS) protocols specifically require IV access or fluids;-
- 2) Use saline locks rather than bags of infused saline when IV access is needed for possible medication administration without the immediate need for the patient to receive fluid volumes, and.
- 3) Consider using bags of saline only when a patient is hypotensive and requires volume replacement.

This guidance is not intended to replace protocols, or online medical direction received from a medical command physician. This guidance should be considered in addressing shortages that may occur in the EMS system.