

Dane County EMS

Monthly Newsletter
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TRAUMA TRIAGE CATEGORIZATION

As the last of the yellow snow melts away and thoughts begin turning back to outdoor activities, we are also reminded of the return of Trauma Season! This month, we would like to just remind everyone quickly about the Trauma Alert Categories that are currently in place as part of the Protocol Book. These alerts are intended not only for communication with the receiving Emergency Departments, but for communication amongst all responders on scene. The color-coding schemes combine injury mechanism with physical exam findings to relay the severity of illness and injury. Please keep in mind; these schemes *likely will not be the same* as the colors assigned during SALT or START Triage, as these colors are used during mass casualty or large-scale incidents and are intended to help allocate scarce resources.

While it has been part of the common vernacular to use the term “Level One Trauma” to indicate the most critically ill, please remember that this is a term that is primarily reserved for the receiving Trauma Centers, where it not only communicates the severity of injury, but also activates a cascade of responding teams, Operating Rooms and blood products; *please refrain from using this term in the field.*

This memo will serve to briefly review the Trauma Categories that are presented on [page 28](#) of the Dane County EMS Protocol Book.

Trauma Green – These patients have a minor mechanism of injury, may not have any outward signs of injury and stable vital signs on scene. Some examples of “Trauma Green” category patients are; head injuries without Loss of Consciousness (LOC), traumatic extremity pain with intact CMS and without deformity or minor lacerations without ongoing blood loss.

Trauma Yellow – These patients have serious mechanisms of injury with high potential for injury or have high *potential* for decompensation in the provider’s opinion despite stable vital signs. Some examples of a “Trauma Yellow” are; head injury with anticoagulant use, deformed extremity after trauma, highway speed MVC with intrusion into the passenger compartment or significant pain improving after EMS intervention.

Trauma Red – These patients have a serious mechanism of injury, or have life or limb threatening injuries identified by the provider. Some examples of a “Trauma Red” are; patients with unstable vital signs after trauma, poorly controlled hemorrhage, altered mental status as a result of trauma or patients with severe pain not improved after EMS interventions.

As with all communications, simple language is always best – if your patient doesn’t “fit” one of the categories above, don’t hesitate to describe their injury and findings during your reports!

Thank you for all that you do to help care for our traumatically injured patients! There are a great many things to keep in mind when responding to the scene of a trauma, and we may occasionally forget how impactful and important the words we choose can be. Please remember to be clear in your communications, because as a member of the healthcare team – you have a HUGE impact in improving patient outcomes!!

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at mtlohmei@medicine.wisc.edu, or the Dane County EMS Office at meier.carrie@countyofdane.com