

# Salt River Fire Department EMS Policies and Procedures

## Policy on Confidentiality and Dissemination of Patient Information and Staff Member Verification



05/2003

401.04

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and its relevance to the Salt River Fire Department.

### SCOPE

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) rules cover all health information, regardless of form, including electronic records, paper records, and oral communication. HIPAA rules also provide healthcare consumers with control over their health information, set boundaries on medical record use and release, ensure the security of personal health information, and establish accountability for medical record use and release.

- Healthcare providers and plans must establish business practices that are "privacy-aware." Some of these practices include:
  - Training staff about privacy issues
  - Appointing a "Privacy Officer"
  - Ensuring that appropriate safeguards exist to protect health information
- . Violators who intentionally release health information for personal gain face criminal sanctions punishable by up to \$250,000 and 10 years in prison.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Given the nature of our work, it is imperative that we maintain the confidentiality of patient information that we receive in the course of our work. Salt River Fire Department prohibits the release of any patient information to anyone outside the organization unless required for purposes of treatment, payment, or healthcare operations and discussions of Protected Health Information (PHI) within the organization should be limited.

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Acceptable uses of PHI within the Department include, but are not limited to, exchange of patient information needed for the treatment of the patient, billing, and other essential healthcare operations, peer review, internal audits, and quality management activities.

The Salt River Fire Department provides services to patients that are private and confidential. Each member is a crucial step in respecting the privacy rights of Salt River Fire Department's patients. It is necessary, in the rendering of Salt River Fire Department services, that patients provide personal information. This information may exist in a variety of forms such as electronic, oral, written, or photographic material. All such information is strictly confidential and protected by federal and state laws.

Salt River Fire Department members must comply with all confidentiality policies and procedures set in place by the Department during their employment or association with Salt River Fire Department. If a member knowingly or inadvertently breaches patient confidentiality policies and procedures at any time, the member must immediately notify the EMS Officer of Salt River Fire Department. A breach of patient confidentiality may result in disciplinary action. At any time upon request, members must return any and all patient confidential information in their possession.

### STANDARD

The standard for this policy is set forth by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996.