

EMS Drug Box Accountability & Chain of Custody Policy

Purpose

To ensure the security, accountability, and legal compliance of all medications carried by EMS personnel by maintaining an unbroken chain of custody for drug boxes, documenting medication use and waste, and reducing organizational and individual liability.

Policy

All EMS drug boxes are considered controlled medical assets and shall remain under the continuous accountability of the assigned crew member from the time they are signed out until they are returned. Proper documentation and chain of custody are required at all times.

Beginning of Shift

At the beginning of each shift, the assigned EMS provider shall:

- Sign out a drug box from the designated storage area.
- Verify the drug box number and security seal number (if applicable).
- Inspect the drug box for completeness, expiration dates, and evidence of tampering.
- Immediately report any discrepancies, missing medications, broken seals, or damaged equipment to the EMS Supervisor before the drug box is placed into service.
- Document receipt of the drug box on the designated Drug Box Accountability Log.

Once signed out, the assigned provider assumes responsibility for the security and accountability of the drug box throughout the shift.

During the Shift

The drug box shall:

- Remain secured and under the direct control of EMS personnel at all times.
- Never be left unattended in unsecured areas.
- Only be accessed by authorized EMS personnel acting within their scope of practice and applicable medical protocols.
- Be protected from unauthorized access, theft, loss, or tampering.

Medication Administration & Waste

Whenever medication is administered:

- All medication administration shall be documented in the patient care report.
- Any partial-dose administration requiring medication waste shall be documented on the approved **Medication Waste Form** immediately following the event.
- Medication waste must be witnessed by another authorized EMS provider whenever required by agency policy or state regulations.
- Both the administering provider and the witness shall sign the Medication Waste Form.

- Any discrepancies involving medication counts or documentation shall be reported immediately through the chain of command.

End of Shift

At the conclusion of each shift, the assigned EMS provider shall:

- Verify the contents and security of the drug box.
- Ensure all medication administration and waste documentation has been completed.
- Return the drug box to the designated secure storage area.
- Sign the drug box back into the Drug Box Accountability Log.

Drug boxes shall not be transferred between crews without proper documentation and authorization.

Chain of Custody

Maintaining a documented chain of custody is essential to protect patients, EMS personnel, and the organization.

Every transfer of possession must be documented through the Drug Box Accountability Log. At no time shall a drug box be left without a clearly identified individual responsible for its custody.

Failure to maintain proper chain of custody may result in disciplinary action and may expose the employee and the organization to regulatory, civil, or criminal liability.

Responsibility

Each EMS provider who signs out a drug box is personally responsible for:

- Maintaining continuous accountability of the drug box.
- Ensuring medications remain secure.
- Completing all required documentation.
- Reporting discrepancies immediately.
- Returning the drug box at the end of the shift.

Supervisors are responsible for auditing accountability logs, investigating discrepancies, and ensuring compliance with this policy.

Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination and may be reportable to regulatory or licensing authorities. Proper documentation and adherence to chain of custody requirements are essential to maintain legal compliance, protect patient safety, and reduce liability for both the provider and the organization.