

9 - MEDICAL INFORMATION ~ 2016

FOLLOW VEHICLE CREW

The Follow Vehicle Crew is responsible for the immediate safety and well being of the Runner. They must NOT let the Runner become a medical statistic. Be Alert! Watch the Runner at all times. Each year we have runners go down; this is due to in large part by the Follow Vehicle personnel NOT paying attention to the runner's condition.

- ❖ Watch for signs of fatigue, dehydration, and for physical exhaustion!
- ❖ The **Follow Vehicle Crew** must be prepared to take immediate steps to prevent a Medical Emergency.
- ❖ Because of the extreme difficulty in trying to determine the Runners physical status from the **Follow Vehicle**, it would be wise to have someone with running experience riding as an observer, possibly an Alternate Runner.
- ❖ The crew must make every effort to keep the runner cool and give them water. Keep them **Hydrated**.
- ❖ Abort their run if you are not satisfied with their condition. Slow them down if they begin to show any signs of a problem. Stop them if necessary and make them take water until their condition improves.
- ❖ Almost without exception, all previous medical emergencies could have been prevented or sharply reduced, if the Follow Vehicle Crew had taken prompt, appropriate action.

MEDICAL DEPLOYMENT

A medical crew will be available at each stage/baton hand off with paramedics, EMTs, and nurses. Advanced Life Support Ambulances will be deployed along the course at various locations, and fast response paramedic/RN response units will be available along the course.

- ❖ Past history has shown the majority of emergency calls are made in the first six stages.
- ❖ Ground ambulance and air ambulance transportation will be available to transport ill and/or injured race participants to the hospital.
- ❖ ALL PATIENTS REQUIRING ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT CARE (I.V FLUIDS, MEDICATIONS, etc) WILL BE TRANSPORTED TO THE HOSPITAL via either ground or air ambulance, per the regional emergency medical services agency. The method of transport will be determined by the Medical Team.
- ❖ Follow vehicles may move the runner to the nearest Stage for medical treatment

MEDICAL PROBLEMS

DEHYDRATION

This is the common root cause of most of the medical emergencies along the course.

- ❖ Dehydration cannot be determined (In the high temperature, low humidity conditions of the desert) by the quantity of sweat generated.
- ❖ Sweat evaporates immediately to cool the body.
- ❖ It is therefore strongly recommended that the Runners **drink water** (and also recommended that they periodically drink electrolyte replacement beverages (NON-CAFFEINATED)) periodically before, throughout, and after their race.
- ❖ Spraying water on the Runner or pouring over the head of a hot runner will not forestall dehydration. This is Not as a substitute for Drinking water.
- ❖ Follow vehicles should offer the Runners water on a regular basis. Don't ask if they want water, offer it to them and strongly encourage them to drink!
- ❖ Even so, some Runners will refuse water right up to the time they lose consciousness and the ability to make rational decisions
- ❖ During the heat of the day, make certain that you watch their water intake and be proactive in keeping them hydrated
- ❖ If it is apparent to you that the Runner is suffering the beginning signs of heat illness and/or dehydration, pull them over and get them into the Follow Vehicle. Lay them flat and then apply ice to Arm Pits, Back of the neck, and Groin area and make them drink the water.
- ❖ CONTACT A RACE VOLUNTEER, HAM RADIO OPERATOR, AMBULANCE CREW, OR BATON EXCHANGE POINT VOLUNTEER for dispatch of a response unit from the medical team.
- ❖ KNOW WHERE YOU ARE on the course at all times in case of emergency so that the correct location can be relayed to the medical team.
- ❖ If you are awaiting the medical team, please turn on your hazard lights, and make yourself known to the medical crew responding.

Fatigue

The medical dictionary defines fatigue as the "Temporary loss of power to respond, induced in a sensory receptor or motor end organ, by continued stimulation".

- ❖ Translation, even though the mind says "go on" the body begins to rebel.
- ❖ "Rubber legs" is the first sign that the Runner is headed for trouble.
- ❖ When Runners legs begin to stiffen they will begin to stagger and they will look like they are running in pain, believe it, they ARE! This is the time to take action.
- ❖ Slow them down to a walk and make sure that they drink plenty of water. Above all, DON'T urge them on!
- ❖ Don't let them proceed. Exchange the runner with an alternate!

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HEAT EMERGENCIES

This can range from simple physical exhaustion to Heatstroke (potentially deadly). It most certainly can be prevented by proper care and attention to the Runner by the **Follow Vehicle Crew!**

- ❖ Simple physical exhaustion is when the Runner just plain runs out of gas.
- ❖ This is usually the result of not being physically conditioned prior to the race.
- ❖ If the Runners have been properly hydrated throughout the race and seem to be slowing down, they are fatigued and probably nearing physical exhaustion.
- ❖ Slow the Runner down! Don't encourage the Runners to try harder!
- ❖ Watch them carefully for other signs!

HEAT EXHAUSTION

This is difficult to predict from the **Follow Vehicle**. Once it occurs and the Runner goes down, the symptoms are weakness, nausea, dizziness, weak and rapid pulse, and probably profuse sweating (**if they have been properly hydrated**). Watch for the telltale signs:

- ❖ The Runner who has refused to drink for a long period of time.
- ❖ Possible changes in the Runners head color (temperature).
- ❖ Changes in the Runners leg movements! (Rubber legs).
- ❖ Attitude or personality changes. **Disorientation = Heatstroke**
- ❖ If the Runners seem pale, weak, depressed, or any of other symptoms of distress, take immediate action.
- ❖ **STOP** them immediately and make further determinations.
- ❖ Get the Runner into the Follow Vehicle and have them **lie down flat**.
- ❖ Re-hydrate them with small sips of water, **if they can tolerate liquids. Nausea is common.**
- ❖ Transport them to the nearest stage/baton hand off for medical assistance.
- ❖ If immediate action if NOT taken, the Runner could suffer from Heatstroke!

HEATSTROKE

Heatstroke is the result of letting a situation get completely out of hand. It is usually the result of the Follow Vehicle personnel NOT observing any of the above indications. Heatstroke most usually results in unconsciousness of the Runner.

- ❖ This is a VERY serious condition and requires immediate Medical Attention.
- ❖ Heat Stroke demands MANDATORY TRANSPORT TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT
- ❖ Symptoms will include ALTERED MENTAL STATUS/CONFUSION, and may include redness of the face, dilated pupils, dry/hot skin.
- ❖ Get the Runner into the Follow Vehicle shade.
- ❖ Remove or loosen any of the Runners restrictive clothing.
- ❖ Get the runner into shade by any method possible. Lie them down
- ❖ USE ALL AVAILABLE MEANS FOR RAPID AND AGGRESSIVE COOLING, INCLUDING COLD WATER ON THEIR BODY, NECK, GROIN, AND HEAD.
- ❖ APPLY COLD PACKS/ICE PACKS TO THE SIDES OF NECK (GENTLY, DO NOT APPLY PRESSURE TO THE NECK), GROIN, AND ARMPITS. THESE RUNNERS ARE DANGEROUSLY HOT ON THE INSIDE, AND RAPID COOLING IS THE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT.
- ❖ DO NOT GIVE ANY ORAL FOOD OR FLUID TO AN UNCONSCIOUS OR CONFUSED PATIENT. THEY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SAFELY CONTROL THEIR AIRWAY. ALLOW THE MEDICAL TEAM TO ASSESS SAFETY FOR ORAL FLUIDS TO THE UNCONSCIOUS OR CONFUSED PATIENT
- ❖ If Medical Assistance is not at location, and you are not able to summons medical team response immediately, transport the runner to the nearest Stage.
- ❖ IF YOU SEE AN AMBULANCE OR FAST RESPONSE MEDICAL UNIT, FLAG THEM DOWN. THEY WILL STOP AND ASSIST AT YOUR SCENE.

PREVENTION

The key to a safe and successful Team is the attention that the **Follow Vehicle Crew** gives to their Runners. They must be ever alert for signs of trouble or the Runner will suffer the serious consequences.

- ❖ Who have you placed in the Follow Vehicle as the Observer? Are they experienced in judging the condition of the runner?
- ❖ In the extreme situation, can those in the Follow Vehicle pick up the runner and place them inside the vehicle for transportation?
- ❖ Runner is beginning to slow down and seems disoriented or in obvious physical distress. **You must test them: do they know the time, where they are, or their circumstances. Should they fail any of these tests get them medical help ASAP.**
- ❖ Take immediate action before the Runner becomes a statistic.
- ❖ Be aware, there are no roadside emergency phones, and cellular phone service is sporadic to nonexistent.
- ❖ All Stages will have a Medic Team in attendance.

TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS

Due to local emergency medical services regulatory requirements, and more importantly for the safety of the race participants, ALL patients who require advanced life support care (IV, IV Fluids, or medications), or who have any period of confusion (unable to accurately answer who they are, where they are, approximate time/day of week/date, and reason that they are where they are (purpose for their being where they are (i.e. if they don't know they are running at Baker to Vegas))), **MUST BE TRANSPORTED VIA GROUND AMBULANCE OR AIR AMBULANCE TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINUED CARE. THE MEDICAL TEAM WILL IMMEDIATELY PLAN FOR TRANSPORT AS SOON AS THEY DETERMINE THAT ADVANCED CARE IS NEEDED OR INITIATED.** The medical team will select the most appropriate method of transport (ground or air) and will make the arrangements for that emergent transport.