



January 6, 2016

Mr. John Morris,
Owner
Beauport Ambulance
19R Pond Road
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear John:

Element Care was audited by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) in 2014. One of the recommendations from that audit was directed towards transportation safety guidelines and procedures.

As a result, we revised our transportation requirements and policy to include the following and communicated these to all of our transportation vendors.

1. O2 tanks, O2 tank cars, and portable concentrators should be secured on all vehicles by using seatbelts or straps attached to a fixed part of the vehicle. If a participant uses a wheelchair for transportation, they should have a O2 tank holder on their wheelchair.
2. All drivers who use the lifts on their vehicles should be on the lifts with participants as described in the guidelines. The only exception being if the total weight of the chair, participant and driver on the lift exceeds the lift capacity.

In preparation for our upcoming 2016 CMS audit, we want to remind you of the revisions that occurred as a result of the previous audit.

I have attached a copy of the revised requirements and policy to this letter along with an attestation form that should be signed by you and returned to us by March 1, 2016.

Thank you for your help with this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Linda Marsh

Contract Liaison
Element Care

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Element Care

I have reviewed Element Care's Transportation Safety Requirements and Policy and agree to comply with the policy.

Provider/Owner

Date

Element Care Participant Transport Requirements

Chair Car Services

Element Care (EC) chooses to use wheelchair vans over other transportation when it is felt the rider requires a “hands-on” type of assistance, or close supervision, with his/her transportation. Therefore, when a chair car vendor receives a request for a chair car from EC, it is expected the vendor provide “hands-on” type of assistance or close supervision to the EC participant. EC expects ambulatory participants to use vehicle stairs versus vehicle lifts unless vendors are notified otherwise.

Additional participant transport requirements are outlined below:

WHEELCHAIRS ON VAN LIFTS / VANS

Lifts on transportation vehicles vary in terms of weight capacity. It is expected drivers are aware of the weight limits corresponding to the vehicles they are operating. If a driver were unable to ride the lift up with a participant and the participant’s equipment due to exceeding the weight limit, the driver would be required to secure the participant as he/she normally would, to secure the **Velcro safety strap** across the front of the lift, and to control the lift from the ground. During this process, the driver must be vigilant and ready to respond if any problems were to arise.

Secured with **Velcro safety strap**:

All participants must be secured using the velcro safety strap while on van lifts. This strap is used to minimize the risk of a participant fall while on the lifts. Proper use of the **Velcro safety strap** entails securing the **Velcro safety strap** around the participant’s body as well as the wheelchair’s back rest. If a participant’s wheelchair were equipped with a seatbelt, this should also be secured as an extra safety measure. The **Velcro safety strap** must be secured before the van lift is operated.

Once the participant is in the van, the driver is required to secure both the participant as well as his/her wheelchair properly prior to transport. Properly securing the participant and his/her wheelchair is achieved by using the wheelchair tie downs as well as securing the participant in place using the vehicle’s seatbelt (if the participant’s wheelchair is equipped with a seatbelt).

DON'T'S:

DO NOT activate the lift without securing the **Velcro safety strap**

DO NOT secure strap in any other position except for around torso of the participant and the back rest of chair.

Wheeled onto van backward with driver behind participant:

The participant should be wheeled onto the lift by the van driver. The driver should pull the wheelchair backward up the ramp, so the participant is facing outward (back to van, face to street).

BACK LOADING LIFTS– EC understands when a backloading lift is utilized, the participant in his/her wheelchair must be wheeled onto the van forward facing, and wheeled out of the van backward facing due to space constraints.

DON'T'S:

DO NOT push participant onto van facing forward.

DO NOT lift the wheelchair to get it over the lip of the lift.

Brakes locked and chair centered on van lift:

Once the participant is fully on the ramp with his/her wheelchair centered in the middle of the ramp and all four wheels are safely on the ramp surface, **the driver should lock both wheelchair brakes.**

DON'T'S:

DO NOT position wheelchair so that it is not centered on the lift.

DO NOT allow the wheels of the wheelchair to hang off the edge of the lift.

DO NOT hold the wheelchair tightly in lieu of locking the brakes.

Riding van lift up with wheelchair on lift:

Once the participant is safe and secure on the lift, the driver would be expected to ride on the lift with the participant. The driver should secure the **Velcro safety strap around the participant's body as well as the wheelchair's back rest.** Once the **Velcro safety strap** is secured, the driver must keep a hand on the handle of the wheelchair while controlling the lift controls with the other hand. Once the lift has come to a stop, the driver should unlock the wheelchair brakes and wheel the participant backward onto the van and secure the participant's wheelchair as needed.

DON'T'S:

DO NOT allow the participant in the wheelchair to ride the lift up alone, unless the weight limit is exceeded.

DO NOT let go of the wheelchair while the lift is moving.

DO NOT unlock the brakes until the lift has stopped and it is safe to move the wheelchair.

DO NOT ride the lift up without securing the velcro safety strap across the front of the lift.

Once on the van, the driver should follow the instructions given as to whether to assist the participant to a van seat or to have the participant sit in his/her wheelchair for the duration of the ride. If the participant were to require assistance to a van seat, the driver would need to ensure a seat belt was used and secured. If a participant were sitting in his/her wheelchair, the driver would need to ensure the wheelchair brakes were locked and the wheelchair was secured utilizing the van tie down straps. The driver would also need to ensure the van seat belt was used to secure the participant in his/her wheelchair while on the van.

POWER CHAIRS ON VAN LIFTS / VANS

Due to the added weight of power chairs, the drivers must be aware of their vehicle's lift capacity and weight limits prior to allowing participants with power chairs on van lifts. Unless instructed otherwise, drivers should either supervise or control power chairs on and off lifts depending on the participant's ability. It is again required a Velcro safety strap be used to secure a participant to the chair. Depending on the size and type of the chair car used, it is the driver's decision whether a power chair should be loaded facing forward or backward. The driver must ensure the power is off and the key removed (if applicable) BEFORE the lift is engaged. The driver should be on the lift with the participant when the lift is in use. Once the power chair is on the van and in place, power to the unit should again be shut off. The driver must secure the power chair using the van tie downs to ensure the chair cannot move. In addition, the driver must also make certain the participant is using a seat belt while on the vehicle.

STANDING ON LIFTS WITH ROLLING WALKERS

If a participant were unable to get onto the van by using the stairs and needed to use the lift, EC would notify the driver/company.

Helping a participant walk onto the lift:

The driver should walk with the participant onto the lift, positioning him/herself behind and to the side of the participant. One hand should be on the participant's hip or low back, while the other hand should be placed on his/her rolling walker to assist with guidance if necessary. When the driver is in this position, he/she is prepared if the participant were to lose his/her balance or trip. The driver should be positioned to guide the participant in the right direction while still allowing the participant to use his/her rolling walker properly.

DON'T's:

DO NOT walk in front of the participant, pulling his/her walker to "guide" him/her along.

DO NOT let participant walk on the lift independently without driver assistance.

DO NOT hold onto a participant's arm to "guide" or "assist" him or her.

Riding the lift with a standing participant:

The driver must ride the lift up with a participant while standing on the lift. The driver needs to be positioned behind and to the side of the participant and must keep one hand on the participant's low back or hip. Once the participant is safely standing centered on the lift, facing the van, the driver would be expected to secure the Velcro safety strap across the front of the lift. Once secure, the driver would ride the lift to the top and once the lift came to a complete stop, the driver would need to walk the participant off the lift and into the van. Finally, **the driver must seat and belt the participant safely into the vehicle.**

DON'T's:

DO NOT allow the participant to ride the lift alone, unless the weight limit will be exceeded.

DO NOT ride the lift without securing the Velcro safety strap across the front of the lift

USING THE STAIRS OF THE VAN WITH A PARTICIPANT

Helping a participant UP the stairs:

The driver is expected to walk the participant to the stairs positioned behind and to the side of the participant, with a hand on his/her low back or hip, and the other hand on his/her rolling walker (if applicable). Once the participant gets to the stairs, the driver can move the rolling walker (if necessary) to the side, and help the participant hold onto one (or both) of the railing(s). The driver would be expected to stand behind the participant, with two hands on him/her, one on each hip, as the participant climbs the stairs one at a time. Once the participant is safely at the top of the stairs, the driver would be expected to help him/her to his/her seat and to belt the participant in safely.

USING A CANE: If the participant were to use a cane, the driver would be expected to have the participant hold the cane in one hand while holding the railing of the stairs in the other

DON'T's:

DO NOT let the participant go up the stairs on his/her own without the driver in position, ready to assist.

DO NOT let the participant try to climb the stairs with his/her rolling walker.

DO NOT take hands off the participant as he/she climbs the stairs.

DO NOT allow the participant to go at a fast pace up the stairs.

Helping a participant DOWN the stairs:

The driver is expected to walk the participant to the stairs and to take a position in front of the participant. The driver would be expected to go down the stairs in front of the participant and would also be expected to go down backwards. This position allows the driver to be ready if the participant were to lose his/her balance or trip. If the participant has a rolling walker, the driver would be required to take the rolling walker down the stairs first while the participant stood at the top of the stairs holding onto a

railing. The driver would then return to the top of the stairs. Next, the driver would instruct the participant to grasp the railing of the stairs. As the participant walked down the stairs, the driver would need to keep two hands on the participant, one at each hip. Once the participant reached the bottom, the driver would help the participant hold onto his/her rolling walker and would walk the participant into the building.

USING A CANE: If the participant were to use a cane, the driver would have the participant hold the cane in one hand and hold the railing of the stairs in the other

DON'T's:

DO NOT allow the participant to go down the stairs on his/her own.

DO NOT stand behind the participant when he/she is going down the stairs.

DO NOT walk with the participant without having hands on him/her.

DO NOT allow the participant to take his/her rolling walker down the stairs.

DO NOT allow the participant to go down the stairs too fast.

RETRIEVING / ESCORTING PARTICIPANTS TO AND FROM AN UNMONITORED VAN

Once the driver arrives to transport the participant, the driver would be expected to walk with the participant for the entire trip to and from the van. EC expects "door – to – door" service". The driver must accompany the participant and assist as needed until the participant is safely on the van, or safely in the door of the destination.

Drivers must walk with the participant as recommended above. If the participant were in a wheelchair, the driver would need to wheel the participant to the van at a safe pace, facing forward, until time to load the lift. If the participant were to use a rolling walker, the driver should be positioned behind and to the side of the participant, with one hand on his/her low back or hip and the other hand on his/her rolling walker to help guide direction as needed. If the client were to use a cane or had no device at all, the driver would be positioned behind and to the side of the participant, with one hand on his/her low back or hip.

Sight Impaired Participants:

When escorting a sight impaired participant, the driver would be expected to announce who he/she is and where he/she is taking the participant. The driver should have the participant place one hand on his/her shoulder, while safely leading the participant in the right direction. The driver must ensure his/her walking speed is slow and steady, and most importantly, the driver would be expected to let the participant know the driver is leading the participant in this manner. The driver should verbally explain all the necessary actions the participant needs to take. ie: "there is a step ahead...please step up....the railing is to the right...".

DON'T's:

DO NOT leave the participant on the sidewalk or in front of his/her house. Escort the participant to his/her door and ensure the participant gets safely inside.

DO NOT let your guard down while walking with the participant. Stay focused on assisting as needed.

DO NOT allow participants to walk to the van unassisted. Escort the participant door – to – door.

DO NOT push the wheelchairs too fast, or lift the wheelchairs over doorway thresholds, road bumps or other obstacles.

DO NOT pull the wheelchair backward, unless getting on the lift.

DO NOT push the wheelchair with one hand.

DO NOT hold a participant by the arm when escorting.

DO NOT pull the rolling walker when escorting a participant.

DO NOT lead a sight impaired participant by the hand or arm.

DO NOT begin to lead a sight impaired participant without verbally letting him/her know first.

SECURING EQUIPMENT ON THE VAN

Once the participant is safely on the van, the driver must ensure the participant is secured and his/her equipment is secured safely as well.

Drivers must take care not to damage equipment or to handle it too roughly as even a small crack in the equipment could render it structurally unsound. Drivers should be mindful of the delicate nature of the equipment being secured and stored including: rollator walker brakes, transport wheelchair drop down handles and wheelchair leg rests.

Securing the participant:

Drivers must escort participants to their seats, ensure they are sitting safely and comfortably and their seat belts are secured. Drivers must ensure all seatbelts are secured prior to transport.

DON'T's:

DO NOT assume a participant can latch his/her own seatbelt

DO NOT leave the participant without latching his/her seatbelt.

Securing O2 tanks on the van:

Participants in wheelchairs using O2, generally have O2 tank holders on their wheelchair to hold their O2 tanks securely during transportation.

If a participant in a wheelchair were to have an O2 tank on a separate cart or a portable concentrator, both of these units would need to be securely fastened to a fixed part of the vehicle using seat belts or straps.

If a participant were ambulatory and had an O2 tank cart or portable concentrator, both units would need to be securely fastened to a fixed part of the vehicle using seat belts or straps.

DON'Ts:

DO NOT allow a participant to hold O2 tank between his/her legs while being transported

Securing a Rolling Walker / Rollator without an O2 tank on the van:

Fold the rolling walker and use the vehicle's safety straps to secure and latch the folded rolling walker to the appropriate area of the vehicle. Appropriate areas include stationary structures in the vehicle such as a pole or the back of seat. If the device used by the participant were a Rollator, the brakes would need to be locked before transport.

DON'T's

DO NOT leave the rolling walker open and unlatched.

Securing a Rolling Walker with an O2 tank:

Do not fold the rolling walker. Instead, keep the rolling walker opened so it can safely hold the O2 tank. The driver would be expected to place the rolling walker close enough to the participant to ensure the O2 hose reaches the participant comfortably and the rolling walker should be secured to an appropriate stationary structure in the vehicle such as a pole or the back of the seat. If the device were a Rollator the driver would be required to lock the brakes.

DON'T's

DO NOT leave the rolling walker un-latched or unsecured.

Securing a wheelchair:

Drivers should follow their individual company's protocol and training for safely securing wheelchairs in vehicles.

DON'T's

DO NOT leave wheelchair brakes unlocked

Additional Items

When possible, drivers should turn off their vehicle engines when loading and unloading as exhaust fumes bother participants and the fumes could enter the EC facilities if windows and doors were opened. EC appreciates engines cannot be turned off when lifts are in use. In addition, EC appreciates weather related exceptions would need to be made in order to provide vehicle heat or air conditioning.