




VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

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Peace On Earth



During the Holidays we think about all the important and nice things we do for the people we transport. We save lives, alleviate suffering and help people with chronic diseases cope. For the overwhelming majority of transports, we do a great job. Our clients are treated respectfully, receive great clinical care, and are transported safely and expeditiously. There are still too many occasions in which people we transport are hurt or killed.

Our driving kills people. Here are a few examples from 2011. A 19 year-old woman was killed when an ambulance on a non-emergency transfer ran a red light. A patient was killed when an ambulance running with emergency warning systems activated went through a light controlled intersection and was struck by a pickup truck. The ambulance driver was cited for not taking control of the intersection, which was required by law in that State. Events of this sort occur several times a week.

We also have patient handling mishaps that kill. Clients fall off cots and suffer fatal intra-cerebral bleeds. Improperly restrained people fall out of wheelchairs. Cots and wheelchairs aren't properly secured and people are injured.

Crashes and patient handling mishaps are the result of specific situations which cause people to engage in specific behaviors. Do you think when a driver runs a red light and crashes that it was the first time he drove unsafely? Do you think that when a person is hurt because he was

restrained improperly it was the first time the technician didn't do it correctly?

What's this got to do with "Peace on Earth"? I contend that one of the reasons these events still occur is that we are not nice enough to each other. We don't trust each other's motivations. Crew Resource Management requires people who see an unsafe condition to report it. I used "report" intentionally, because it has such a nasty connotation. Only rats report. Who wants to be a rat?

When the culture of an organization is such that the recognition of and the attempt to mitigate an unsafe condition places a stigma on the person who is trying to do the right thing, we are doomed to repeat our failures. We won't trust and respect each other unless we treat each other cordially and respectfully every day. Environments in which people are treated nicely feel safe. Things are peaceful.

Everybody who reads this newsletter knows something that I don't know. Everybody who reads this newsletter knows something that everybody else who reads this newsletter doesn't know. If we become open-minded enough to appreciate these facts, can you imagine what benefits we can derive from such a huge collective wisdom?

There is no mechanism available to completely prevent human error. We all make mistakes which place us and our clients in harm's way. Embrace the notion that we are all here to help each other get through the day. Protect each other by open, free-flowing communication. Rats live in the darkness of discontent and mistrust. Open your eyes to the light of knowledge and we'll have "Peace On Earth".

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