



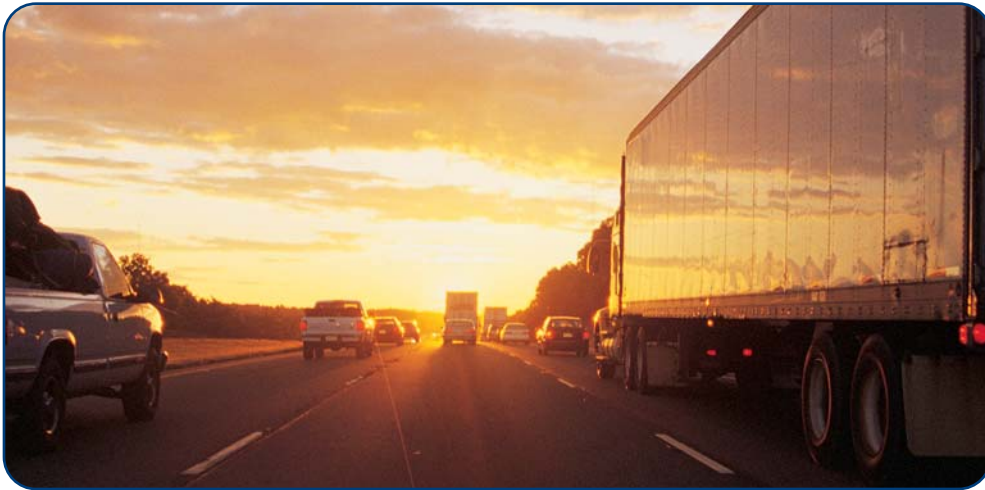
VITALS

For Medical Transport Professionals

A Weekly Safety Newsletter

Ground Transport Safety: Part 2

By Mark Collins, Director Of Operations, Medflight Of Ohio



Medics in our industry typically work multiple jobs. Do you have a fitness for duty policy that is enforced on a daily basis to make certain that personnel are adequately rested?

Another fatality occurred when an ambulance drove across two lanes of traffic, caught a guardrail and flipped at least twice. The driver had worked as a dispatcher until 11 pm the previous night. After that he spent the rest of the night running emergency calls as a volunteer firefighter. He reported to work at 6 am. His honesty compelled him to admit that he might have dozed off. Independent of commitment, motivations or the need to support a family, is this fair to our patients and other personnel? Do we have processes in place that protect us from ourselves?

Do you monitor the impact of your department's use of lights and sirens and amend it accordingly? The New York State DMV shows an annual frequency of 400 ambulance crashes, which result in the injury of two people a day. It is estimated that 75% of these accidents could be prevented if ambulances stopped at controlled intersections.

The National Safety Council estimated that 6,500 ambulance crashes in 2000 resulted in 3,686 injuries. In a May 6, 2002 publication the American Ambulance Association predicted that 10,000 ambulance crashes result in injuries and deaths annually.

Medical/EMS ground transport is a tough business. Working long hours in a variety of physically and mentally hostile environments takes its toll. Medical Transport Workers must be concerned with patient care, patient comfort, patient sensitivities, patient special needs, requestors, government funding, insurance payments, maintenance and modernization of equipment, members of the public who consider a medical transport vehicle as a target, and, last but not least, having a life away from work. With all of these pressures we must do what we can to control any component of risk. If we want to "Arrive Alive and Do No Harm, we must remember that safety is no accident. Keep up the great WORK. (Bibliography available upon request from Mike Szczygiel)

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