



# VITALS

For Medical Transport Professionals

A Weekly Safety Newsletter

## American Ambulance Association- Position Statement On EMS Driving



### *Issue:*

In the 21st century health care environment in the United States, health care providers are attempting to find solutions and systems to reduce the unintended deaths and injuries to hospitalized patients described by the 1999 Institute of Medicine study. Likewise, ambulance providers are challenged to look carefully at themselves to reduce the incidence of death and injury to patients, ambulance service employees and the public due to collisions between ambulances and other vehicles and/or stationary objects.

### *Background:*

Leaders in the ambulance industry and those who insure the industry are acutely aware of the significant risks associated with driving ambulances, especially under emergency conditions. According to leading insurers of ambulance services, annually, over 10,000 ambulance related collisions occur that result in injury or death. The rate of ambulance collisions per miles driven is believed to be several times that of civilian drivers.

Current studies focus on how to make ambulances structurally more crash worthy and how to make a safer patient compartment. This increases survival rates for crew and patients after a crash has occurred, however, this does little to address the issue of accident prevention. Enough scientific evidence currently exists to easily understand the multiple risk factors involved in EMS driving and how they can be mitigated.

The benefits of a systems approach to safe ambulance driving practices are significant. First and most importantly, safe driving systems reward EMS staff and management in upholding the first tenet of medicine, "do no harm to your patient;" second, the safe ambulance driver reduces the risk to himself and passengers; third, it creates a safer more stable work platform for treating patients while the vehicle is in motion; and finally, it reduces the risk to the driving public at large.

The American Ambulance Association recognizes the serious issue of vehicle collisions in EMS and is committed to helping ambulance providers significantly reduce collisions. The AAA will provide educational sessions, publicize best practices, publish articles, provide website links and a bibliography, and work with other agencies and associations to address this issue.

The AAA Professional Standards and Research Committee is authorized to develop the above concepts to assist the AAA membership in reducing ambulance vehicle collisions.

### *AAA Position:*

The American Ambulance Association is positioning itself to educate its members regarding the high incidence of collisions and provide them with information, technical assistance, and industry "best practices" to substantially reduce or eliminate the risk of ambulance collisions.

The AAA recognizes that there may be many causes of ambulance collisions. The AAA also recognizes that a systems approach to safe driving can significantly reduce the risk of collisions and the resultant death or injuries. The AAA also acknowledges that there is scientific evidence that supports a system approach to safe EMS driving.



### *Conclusion:*

The AAA recognizes the hazards of driving an ambulance under emergency and non-emergency conditions and that many of the thousands of collisions occurring annually may be preventable. The AAA also recognizes that there is science and/or a body of knowledge that supports the implementation of a safe EMS driving system. The AAA will strive to provide the educational focus to significantly change the incidence of ambulance crashes across the nation by being a leading advocate of vehicle and crew safety systems available today.

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