



# VITALS

For Medical Transport Professionals

A Weekly Safety Newsletter

## Seizures, Anti-epileptics & Driving

An issue that seems to be arising with increasing frequency is, can an employee with a seizure disorder and taking medicine drive an ambulance? This is a terribly complicated issue that requires input from local legal counsel. It is impossible and impractical for a non-attorney to attempt to determine which laws are applicable and, if applicable, how they should be applied in a specific situation. For example, how does HIPAA impact this matter? Medical Transportation Providers know something about seizures, but we shouldn't over-estimate the sophistication of our knowledge. Physician guidance is crucial.

It's a given that we want to comply with all laws, be fair to our employees, and make sure that everybody involved can "Arrive Alive and Do No Harm." What are some things that we can think about as we prepare, in advance, to address this issue?

Independent of their applicability to Medical Transportation, we can use the DOT Commercial Motor Vehicle laws as food for thought. Unfortunately, Section 391.41(b) (120), addresses controlled substances, but doesn't specifically mention anti-epileptics.

The CMV laws require that physicians who evaluate drivers should be familiar with the driver's medical history and assigned duties. What the physician is really doing is making an assessment of risk. Namely, what is the likelihood that an event will occur in which the driver suffers a clinical event that causes him to kill himself, his crew, the patient or innocent bystanders? We all know that the work environment for medical transportation exposes drivers to heat, cold, noise, strobe lights, dehydration, alterations in metabolism due to erratic meal times, and many other physiologic stressors. How do these factors increase the likelihood of a seizure? How do they alter the effectiveness of medication?

Talk with your lawyer and medical director to make sure that your job descriptions adequately address all factors (physical, environmental, and psychological) pertinent to the safe performance of duties at your worksites. Any work related factors that can trigger seizures, increase their frequency or severity, or alter the efficacy of the medications used to treat them should be considered. This matter requires a potential life or death decision. Treat it that way.



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