



# VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

Mike Szczygiel (Segal)  
888-969-8033  
meszczygiel@thomcoins.com

## Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) - Developing SOPs

Emergency Responders, Non-emergency transfer services, Paratransit and Ambulatory services providers all need solid SOPs. It doesn't matter if you have one vehicle or hundreds in your fleet. The nomenclature of SOPs may include: Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG), Policies and Procedures Manual (PPM), Operations Manual (OM), General Orders (GO) or Chief's Rules (CR). However, they all perform the same functions: clearly define the mission of your organization and give step-by-step procedures for achieving it. SOP is the commonest name and we'll use it henceforth.



Some people have said that "Guidelines" are less restrictive and violation of "Guidelines" creates less liability. This is clearly not the case. Every organization must supply their personnel with a document that specifies required performance standards for doing their jobs correctly and safely.

If you have no SOP, as mentioned previously, FEMA FA-197 is available online at no cost. It provides a wealth of guidance and is a good starting point. Reviewing SOPs from similar organizations is a helpful. Obtain appropriate counsel to ensure compliance with federal, state, count or other local requirements. The process by which SOPs are developed, implemented, reviewed and revised should also be a well thought out matter of policy. Existing SOPs should be reviewed at least annually. The review can be more effective if you organize a team that includes publicly named personnel who welcome comments from other employees about any component of the SOP. If current SOPs do not reflect the actual behavior of your personnel, perform an objective assessment. Then either change the SOP or enforce compliance with it.

Organizational SOPs have many sections such as, job descriptions, training requirements, orientation, certification requirements, and others. This article will focus on vehicle operational procedures. Next Week: Sample Vehicle Operations Table of Contents

### About Billy Rutherford

Billy Rutherford, MS, President, American Integrated Training Systems, Inc. (AITS). As a contractor, Billy managed the development of the US Department of Transportation, Emergency Vehicle Course (EVOC) National Standard Curriculum (Ambulance) and the Train the Trainer (T3) Course to qualify personnel to conduct the National Standard Curriculum. AITS conducts the T3 courses nationwide. The schedule for these courses is published at [www.AITStraining.com](http://www.AITStraining.com)



### Public Relations First Aid- A Resource Kit For Maintaining A Positive Public Image- Part 5

#### Legal Counsel

Have a relationship with legal counsel before you are involved in any litigation. Do not wait until you have a case. As your public spokesperson works on the media and public perception, your legal counsel will focus on your company's needs and can work behind the scenes to help minimize the litigation toward your organization. As with a Spokesperson, they should also be in tune with the local community, as their actions can affect public opinion. As said before, during the preliminary progress of events, it is good to keep your legal counsel behind the scenes. Only present them to the media and the public to address legal issues pertaining to the case. When working with your legal counsel make sure:

- They have a focus in the area of law for your company's needs. Whether it's Medical Malpractice for patient mishandling or Criminal Defense for patient abuse, find the right counsel for the job.
- They can work with your spokesman as a team. Legal actions can be viewed as negative or positive; make sure your spokesperson is aware of each move by counsel because it will affect the way he or she address the media and the public.
- They are ethical in the way they treat the case; the way the case is handled is a direct reflection on your organization.

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