



Passenger Restraint in Emergency Response Vehicles

I. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this policy to strongly remind EMS agencies and individual EMS providers to evaluate their overall operations and develop practices or internal controls that lead to a safe working environment and a *culture of safety* in all aspects of the agency. This policy also assists EMS agencies in reviewing or developing policies and practices that ensure safe driving habits, the appropriate use of seat belts by all crew members, passengers, and patients as well as a review of practices in the patient care compartment to improve safety.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is strongly recommended that all EMS agencies develop and regularly review, service specific policies for their personnel that include the provision of appropriate emergency driver training programs to develop proper driving skills and behaviors. The policies should also include, but are not limited to:

- All passengers including patients and EMS personnel should be restrained
- All drivers and front seat passengers of ambulances must use seat belts at all times when the vehicle is in motion
- All operators & passengers of non-ambulance response vehicles (EASV, ALSFR, etc.) must use seatbelts at all times when the vehicle is in motion
- All patients as well as any passengers riding in the patient compartment must use seat belts at all times when the vehicle is in motion
- All EMS personnel in the patient compartment must use seat belts when they are not attending to a patient and the vehicle is in motion. In as much as possible, EMS personnel should perform patient care activities while restrained by a seatbelt. Only if it becomes necessary to care for the patient, should the seat belt be removed. Examples of necessary care are CPR, artificial ventilation, medication administration, or reassessment of unstable patients.
- All patients on the stretcher must be secured when the vehicle is in motion, or the stretcher is being carried or moved; stretcher harness straps should always be used in accordance with manufacturer recommendations
- It is not permissible or safe to have a parent or caregiver hold a child in his or her arms or lap. The child and the parent/ caregiver should *each* be restrained appropriately.

- A child's own safety seat- when appropriate, available, and intact – can be used to restrain a child during transport.
- If the ambulance service does not have an ambulance equipped with child safety seats or restraint, it is recommended that the agency purchase approved child safety seat(s) or restraint(s) for each ambulance. More than one size restraint may be needed to accommodate the variety of sizes of children (ie. Newborn, infant, toddler). Pediatric patients up to 100 pounds should be restrained with a seat or restraint.
- Agencies should routinely train EMS personnel in the use of various child safety seats/ restraints available and have a policy for how injured and uninjured children will be transported
- All safety seats/restraints should be used according to manufacturer's recommendations
- All equipment and supplies in the driver and patient compartment should be secured in a crash worthy manner
- Consider limiting use of lights and sirens when appropriate

III. Conclusion

Whether paid or volunteer, commercial, municipal, independent, or fire based, the EMS community cannot afford to lose EMS providers due to death, injury, or disability when the circumstances can be prevented through education and policy improvements. We owe it to our patients and their families to treat them with the most recent evidence-based care, including the safety measures we follow while they are in our ambulances. It is the responsibility of every EMS agency and prehospital care provider to establish and/or continue the culture of safety in emergency medical services.

IV. References

More information on ambulance safety and safe transport can be found below:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

www.nhtsa.gov

EMS for Children Innovation and Improvement Center (EIIC) Safe Transport of Children in Ground Ambulances

<https://emscimprovement.center/domains/prehospital-care/transport-guidelines/>

NASEMSO Safe Transport of Children by EMS: Interim Guidance

<https://nasemso.org/wp-content/uploads/Safe-Transport-of-Children-by-EMS-InterimGuidance-08Mar2017-FINAL.pdf>

Prehospital Emergency Care Recommended Essential Equipment for Basic Life Support and Advanced Life Support Ground Ambulances 2020: A Joint Position Statement

https://media.emscimprovement.center/documents/Recommended_Equipment_for_BLS_ALS_Ambulances_2020.pdf

Jeffrey L. Jarvis, Vaughn Hamilton, Mike Taigman & Lawrence H. Brown (2021) Using Red Lights and Sirens for Emergency Ambulance Response: How Often Are Potentially Life-Saving Interventions Performed?, Prehospital Emergency Care, 25:4, 549-555, DOI: 10.1080/10903127.2020.1797963