



New York State
Department of Health
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

POLICY STATEMENT

Supersedes/Updates: 89-10

No. 2000-07

Date: August 16, 2000

Re: No Smoking Policy

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POLICY STATEMENT ON SMOKING

Background:

This policy replaces Policy Number 89-10 (No Smoking in Ambulances), the Department of Health policy statement that encouraged all EMS agencies to adopt a strict policy banning cigarette smoking in ambulance vehicles at any time.

Since that time the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has issued guidelines concerning this topic as it relates to the Blood Borne Pathogen Standard (OSHA 1910). The Environmental Protection Agency has also issued a statement concerning the exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke.

As a reminder, smoking has been proven to be a health hazard and known to cause cancer and cardio-pulmonary disease. It should be noted that smoking and exposing others to second hand smoke are both recognized as health hazards. The presence of cigarette smoke in an enclosed compartment, such as an ambulance, causes damage to disposable supplies and is prohibited.

OSHA regulations state that there shall be no smoking within 20 feet of any compressed cylinder including oxygen (29 CFR 1910.101b). This rules out smoking in any ambulance or EMS response vehicle as well as within most garages or apparatus bays where EMS vehicles are housed. This sentiment is echoed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in their standards. In accordance with the New York State Clean Indoor Air Act, smoking is not permitted in most public and government owned buildings.

In addition to all of the known health and safety related aspects of smoking, the public relations perspective must also be examined. The health care community has repeatedly indicated the hazards of smoking. As a professional representative of the healthcare community, EMS providers must support the public health warnings and not permit smoking in the health care environment. Disregarding this may lessen the public confidence and understanding of EMS professionals as health care providers.

Policy:

It is the policy of the Bureau of EMS that there should be no smoking in or around any ambulance or EMS response vehicle at any time. This includes vehicle garages and apparatus bays, as well as during an EMS response in which patients are being treated. Smoking should be restricted to defined areas. It is recommended that smoking and/or loitering be prohibited in stairwells, vestibules, entrances and exits.

All provider agencies need to develop and institute policies consistent with this Policy Statement.