



Ontario Emergency Medical Services Section 21 Sub Committee

Emergency Medical Services Guidance Note #2

Issue: EMS Vehicle Occupant Safety

Collisions and/or unanticipated movement involving EMS vehicles are a major cause of injury and death amongst EMS workers. It is well established that the use of safety belts is the single most effective means of reducing injuries and fatalities in motor vehicle incidents.

All EMS workers and passengers are required to use seat belts at all times when a vehicle is in motion in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Traffic Act (HTA) unless they are exempted by section 5 of Regulation 613 (Seat Belt Assemblies) which states:

“an ambulance attendant or any other person transported in the patient’s compartment of an ambulance as defined in section 61 of the Act is exempt from subsection 106 (3) of the Act where attendance to a patient makes it impracticable to wear a seat belt assembly”.

During activities such as emergent care (i.e. CPR, artificial ventilation, medication administration, or reassessment of unstable patients) workers may be required to leave their seated and belted position during the transport of these patients.

Studies have demonstrated that if involved in a crash, the occupants in the patient compartment are at a substantially greater risk for injury or fatality, than those restrained in the front seats. If attendance to a patient makes it impracticable for a worker to wear a seat belt, the amount of time a worker is unrestrained is to be minimized. For example where possible an EMS worker should provide optimal patient care prior to departure. Where the section 5 exemption does not apply all EMS personnel and passengers in the patient compartment are required to wear seat belts while the vehicle is in motion.

It is equally important that all items in the cab and patient compartment be secured at all times while the vehicle is in motion. Any items that are not properly secured become projectiles in the event of a collision and can cause serious injury to occupants of the vehicle. Items and equipment such as, oxygen tanks, defibrillators, zip packs, medical response bags and personal belongings transported in the vehicle must be secured in accordance with applicable standards or stored in compartments.

EMS workers are responsible to ensure the patient(s), stretcher, and/or incubator/ isolette are secured properly in the EMS vehicle prior to vehicle movement using the current Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Emergency Health Services Branch approved standards.



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Workplace parties are advised to reference the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) clauses 25(2)(a) requiring the provision of information, instruction and supervision to a worker and 25(2)(h) which requires the employer to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.

This document should be shared with the workplace Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative, incorporated into the workplace occupational health and safety policy and program where appropriate and posted on the OAPC and PSHSA web-sites.

For additional information on the requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), please contact the Ministry of Labour call centre at 1-877-202 - 0008, or visit the website at: <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca>.

This guidance note is developed for informational purposes only. Reference should always be made to the OHSA and regulations to ascertain one's rights and duties under the law. It is the responsibility of all workplace parties to ensure compliance with the OHSA and regulations, and to seek independent legal advice where questions remain.

The Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) may be contacted for assistance in the development and implementation of an occupational health and safety policy and program: www.pshsa.ca.