



Ontario Emergency Medical Services Section 21 Sub Committee

Emergency Medical Services Guidance Note #14

Issue: Paramedic Use of Novel Conveyances

Preamble

EMS Responders often work in relatively uncontrolled environments and may respond to situations in which paramedics are asked to use novel conveyances to access or transport patients to more accessible areas. Therefore, at a minimum, there should be a safety awareness program to protect workers who encounter these situations. When properly developed and adhered to, such programs may protect colleagues, patients and the public alike. In the event local allied agencies (rescue operations) are not available, the following protocol may be followed for paramedic and patient safety.

Background

While usually associated with northern regions of the province, an EMS agency response involving remote or difficult access to patients can happen anywhere, as recreational, and industrial use of snow machines and ATVs in close proximity to urban areas is now commonplace. Additionally, patients can be found in difficult to access locations such as on a roof, an island, a ski hill, or a frozen waterway, where access to, and removal of these patients using a novel conveyance may be the best option.

This Guidance Note is intended for those EMS agencies that choose to allow their staff members to use these novel conveyances in these circumstances. It is not intended to encompass all scenarios but should provide the foundation for a safety awareness program aimed at ensuring that access to these patients is performed in the safest and most expedient manner possible by working cooperatively with trained allied agencies, supervisors and the public at large.

Occupational Health and Safety Precautions and Control Measures

Risk Assessment:

Situations may arise where EMS agency response involves a patient in a remote location or a situation where limited access to a patient creates difficulties for crews in terms of getting accurate or complete knowledge and information. The patient-centric nature of paramedic work may contribute to hasty decisions to utilise unfamiliar but available novel conveyances, which could place workers at risk. In order to determine whether allowances and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) will be afforded to their crews, EMS agencies should determine whether staff will be permitted to use the following equipment to gain access to a patient, as may be appropriate in the circumstances, such equipment may include:

- A motorboat, operated by a citizen, operated by Police, operated by Coast Guard, etc.



Ontario Emergency Medical Services Section 21 Sub Committee

- The box of a pick-up truck or backhoe, operated by a hydro worker, operated by a construction worker, operated by a citizen, etc.
- A snowmobile, ATV, UTV, farm type tractor etc.

Parameters around such use should be in place to ensure that paramedics consider the associated potential for risk, prior to committing to any action.

Control Measures

The hierarchy of controls can help you choose the right controls for your workplace. The levels in the hierarchy of controls, in order from most effective to least effective, are:

1. elimination
2. substitution
3. engineering controls
4. administrative controls
5. personal protective equipment (PPE)

When considering control measures, always start by considering the most effective controls first. First, try to eliminate the hazard altogether. Where eliminating the hazard is not possible, use multiple engineering and administrative controls.

The following control measures (listed in order of effectiveness) are recommended for use to prevent worker exposure to workplace injuries during patient access and removal procedures:

Engineering Controls: Physical or mechanical controls put in place to reduce the risk of exposure to the hazard at the source. Employer involvement in this regard is not possible as they cannot ensure scene security and control. A 'safe scene assessment' by the attending paramedic crews will be the only input towards determining if proper physical or mechanical controls appear to be present and well maintained.

Administrative Controls: There should be policies and/or Standard Operating Procedures in place for all EMS agencies to govern usage of novel conveyances that:

- Clearly state if novel conveyance usage is allowed or strictly forbidden. If allowed at all, the acceptable usage parameters should be clearly set out and training provided.
- Expresses the preferential use of publicly owned or corporate equipment (i.e., Police, Fire Services, Public Works resources, Hydro, Pipeline, Telecommunications).
- Communicates the importance of not contravening other Occupational Health and Safety policies when employing the novel conveyance (i.e., High Angle Rescue Policy, Confined Space Policy, Electrical Hazards Policy, Trench/Excavation Policy, Drowning Prevention/Ice Rescue Policy, etc.)



Ontario Emergency Medical Services Section 21 Sub Committee

- Defines how paramedics are to apply these safety parameters (i.e., completion of a checklist, completion of an Incident/Occurrence Report, direct consultation with the supervisor, etc.)

Personal Protective Equipment: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that protects a worker against injury while employing a novel conveyance may be specifically provided by the employer (i.e., life jackets) or by the operator of the conveyance (i.e., seat belts). In all scenarios where novel conveyance options are utilised, all appropriate and well-fitting PPE must be worn.

Safe Work Practices (General):

While composure and demeanor are second nature to first responders, when enlisting the assistance of a civilian operator of a conveyance, caution and repeated assessments of their competence is imperative to scene safety.

Workers should be empowered to ensure their own safety during the entire utilisation of a novel conveyance.

Some Relevant Occupational Health and Safety Act Requirements

Employers are required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) to:

- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker – OHSA Clause 25 (2)(h)
- Provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health and safety of the worker – OHSA Clause 25 (2)(a)
- Ensure the equipment, materials and protective devices as prescribed are provided – OHSA Clause 25 (1)(a)
- Ensure the equipment, materials and protective devices provided by the employer are maintained in good condition – OHSA Clause 25 (1)(b)

Supervisors are required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) to:

- Ensure that a worker uses or wears the equipment, protective devices or clothing that the worker's employer requires to be used or worn - OHSA Clause 27 (1)(b)
- Ensure that a worker works in a manner and with the protective devices, measures and procedures required by the Act and regulations – OHSA Clause 27 (1)(a)
- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker – OHSA Clause 27 (2)(c)



Ontario Emergency Medical Services Section 21 Sub Committee

Workers are required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) to:

- Use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing that his employer requires to be used or worn – OHSA Clause 28 (1)(b)
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and which may endanger himself, herself or another worker – OHSA Clause 28 (1)(c)

References and resources

[Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

Health and Safety System Partners

<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/websites.php>

Transport Canada – Marine Safety – Safe Boating Guide -

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/media/documents/marinesafety/TP-511e.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Transportation – Smart Ride Safe Ride Handbook -

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/driver/pdfs/smart-ride-safe-ride-ATV.pdf>

Ontario Ministry of Transportation – Snowmobile Safety -

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/snowmobile-safety.shtml>

Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development – Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines for Farming in Ontario, Section 1: Tractors and other Self Propelled Farm Equipment - https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/pubs/farming/gl_tractors.php

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 Public Services Health & Safety Association website and the websites of other interested stakeholders.

The Public Services Health and Safety Association may be contacted for assistance in the development and implementation of an occupational health and safety program, training and specialized services: <http://www.pshsa.ca/>

For more information, contact the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) Health and Safety Contact Centre toll free at 1-877-202-0008.

This guidance note has been prepared to assist the workplace parties in understanding some of their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and the regulations. It is not intended to replace the OHSA or the regulations and reference should always be made to the official version of the legislation.



Ontario Emergency Medical Services Section 21 Sub Committee

It is the responsibility of the workplace parties to ensure compliance with the legislation. This guidance note does not constitute legal advice. If you require assistance with respect to the interpretation of the legislation and its potential application in specific circumstances, please contact your legal counsel.

While this guidance note will also be available to MLTSD inspectors, they will apply and enforce the OHSA and its regulations based on the facts as they may find them in the workplace. This guidance note does not affect their enforcement discretion in any way.



Ontario Emergency Medical Services Section 21 Sub Committee

Sample Novel Conveyance Checklist

(This sample should be modified for your services local needs)

- Use of novel conveyance that appears in good condition and repair
- Use of a conveyance that is rated for the specific use proposed and potential number of occupants
- Is the required, equipment for that conveyance present and in working order (i.e. life jackets, anchors, navigation lights, paddles, tow ropes, helmets, etc.)
- Required safety equipment is donned and fits properly
- Instruction on the use and operation of the conveyance is given by the operator and understood
- Required licensing of the conveyance and operator is present
- Inform public volunteer that they are not covered by the WSIB or the OHSA
- Paramedic has confidence in the operator's knowledge and ability
- Operator appears competent and free of intoxicants
- Water access operator has knowledge of the waterway, shoals, channel markers, currents, ice conditions, traffic patterns and any other safety hazard in the area
- Field or woodlot operator has knowledge of the terrain, trails, fences, ditches, ridges, quarries and any other safety hazard in the area
- Operator has specific knowledge of the location of the patient and the route required for access
- GPS coordinates (if known and appropriate in the situation) are relayed to CAC
- Radio/cell communication is to always be available, or efforts should be made to ensure another form of communication is maintained.