EMERGENCY VEHICLE OPERATOR COURSE
Goal

To provide ambulance operators with knowledge and skills to operate their vehicles so that vehicle, equipment, crew, and patients will be delivered safely and efficiently, and the safety of the public will be assured during all phases of the delivery of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) involving the ambulance.
You will learn about ............... 

Legal aspects of ambulance operation, including appropriate vehicle procedures based upon federal, state, local, and organization regulations; due regard; true emergencies; negligence; abandonment; good Samaritan provisions; and patient's rights.
You will learn about ............... 

Communications responsibilities for receiving and sending radio messages and for interpreting hand signals.
Ambulance types and operation, including general guidelines about weight restrictions and operation for each type.
You will learn about ............... 

Ambulance readiness, including inspection, maintenance, and repair.
You will learn about ............... 

Navigation and route planning, including selecting the safest route to the emergency scene and the medical facility.
You will learn about ............... 

Normal and high-risk driving situations and the appropriate driving skills for situations from routine traffic to hazardous weather and traffic conditions.
You will learn about ..................

Safety considerations for ensuring safety of passengers, patients and their family, the ambulance, and the crew.
You will learn about ..................

This course will not cover pursuit driving or high speed operation of an ambulance. The US Department of Transportation recommends operating at or below the posted speed limits and getting to the scene safely.
Who is this course for?

• new hires or experienced operators who want refresher training
• work in large cities or small towns
• belong to paid professional or volunteer organizations
Driver Selection

Before you were hired, your overall qualifications were reviewed. This review may have included driving record checks, medical checks, and vocational tests.
Maintaining Driver Qualifications

- keeping your license up-to-date and valid
- reporting any violation you receive when driving your personal vehicle
- remaining physically and mentally fit
- participating in training when available
Questions????
Lesson 2

Legal Aspects of Ambulance Operation
Goal

To provide participants with knowledge of the federal, state, and local laws and of how to apply the laws when operating an ambulance.
Introduction

As an ambulance operator, you are responsible for the safe and efficient transportation of your patients and crew. At the same time, you must look out for the safety of the public.
Types of Laws

- Constitutional Law
- Statutory Laws
- Ordinances
- Rules and Regulations
Exemptions

• Ambulance operators are subject to all traffic regulations unless a specific exemption is made in the state or local statutes.
• Exemptions are legal only while operating in the emergency mode.
• Even with an exemption, operators can be found criminally or civilly liable if involved in a crash.
A reasonably careful person, performing similar duties and under similar circumstances, would act in the same manner.
Law of Due Regard

• Am I responding like others would in the same situation?
• Am I giving enough notice of my vehicle's approach to allow other motorists and pedestrians to clear a path and protect themselves?
• Am I using the signaling equipment appropriately? Is it necessary to use it? Can motorists and pedestrians hear and see my signals?
• Am I using extreme caution? I must never travel at a speed that does not permit complete control of my vehicle.
True Emergency Situation

Involves high probability of death or serious injury to an individual and action by the operator may reduce the seriousness of the situation.
True Emergency Situation

• Is there a high probability of death or serious injury to the patient?
• Will my actions reduce the seriousness of the incident?
Negligence

Any action which violates a standard of practice or care.
Negligence

• Do I have a "duty to act" toward the other person?

• What must I do to avoid a "breach of duty?" (For example, you must not fail to respond.)

• How can I avoid the other person suffering injury or loss because of my duty? (The actual cause of the other person's injury or loss must be a direct result of breach of duty, such as a violation of a traffic regulation.)
Abandonment

Act of refusing to transfer or terminating transportation prior to being relieved by other qualified health care providers.
Good Samaritan Provision

Protects persons who give aid at the scene of an emergency from liability for additional damage or injury.
Patient Rights

- Consent
- Confidentiality
Patient Rights - Consent

• Respect the patient's right to refusal--do not restrain patients who have refused treatment, demand they be treated, or argue with them concerning the treatment.

• Have someone witness that your EMS team has offered care and the patient refused.

• Document that your EMS team offered care and the patient refused. Report immediately to dispatcher the refusal of care.
Patient Rights - Confidentiality

• Do not speak to the press, your family, friends, or other members of the public about the service provided.

• Do not relate specifics about what a patient may have said, who the person was or was with, anything unusual about the patient's behavior, or any descriptions of personal appearance.
Other Legal Issues

• Responsibility for passenger possessions
• Failure to report crashes or using improper reporting procedures
• Exceeding load capacity of the vehicle (must follow vehicle weight restrictions)
• Failure to conduct/record vehicle inspections
• Failure to provide training (must not operate any vehicle that operator has not completed operator training)
• Failure to maintain training records
Scenario 1

You are returning from a run when a car pulls up beside you while you are stopped at a traffic light. The individual informs you that a three-vehicle crash has just occurred on the nearby interstate. No other emergency vehicles are at the scene. The individual informs you that several of the victims are trapped in the cars. The severity of the injuries is unknown. Is this a true emergency situation? Why?
Scenario 1 - Answer

This is a true emergency. Because so little information is known about the injuries or about any other circumstances, the operator must assume a true emergency. In this case, the operator is determining the "nature of the emergency." Always call the dispatcher to tell them about the situation and get instructions.
Scenario 2

YES, because a true emergency does exist. The ambulance operator is complying with the statute (using signaling equipment) while violating the normal direction of movement (wrong way--one way street). Without more information to indicate why traveling the wrong way down this street might be unsafe, it would seem that the operator is exercising due regard.
Scenario 2 - Answer

Your ambulance is traveling the wrong way down a one-way street while enroute to a fire at a large apartment complex where people are reported injured. You are using all signaling equipment. Are you observing "due regard"? Why?
Scenario 3

A dispatcher reports that a man phoned requesting help. The man is hysterical and the dispatcher can not determine the extent of the injuries. You respond in an emergency mode. In route, you receive a call from the dispatcher. He reports the man has calmed down and the man thinks his son may have broken his ankle; there is some pain and swelling. Is this a true emergency situation? Why?
Most likely NO. Even though the call started as a true emergency, the dispatcher changed the nature of the emergency during the run. Unless local policy dictates otherwise, a broken bone is generally not considered a threat to human life.
Summary

• Federal, state, and local guidelines dictate Emergency Vehicle Operation
• Organizational requirements must incorporate and not contradict federal, state, or local requirements
• There are certain situations where the ambulance operator may be exempt from the regulations--know the exemptions for your state
• Operators must exercise due regard for the safety of all patients and passengers
Summary

• Operators should not operate under emergency response conditions unless a true emergency exists
• Operators need to "think safety" to avoid negligence charges
• Operators have an obligation to continue providing care until relieved by other care providers once the operator begins the patient/provider relationship
• Patients have rights such as consent and confidentiality in medical emergency situations
Lesson 3

Communication and Reporting
Goal

To provide participants with knowledge of the communication roles and responsibilities and protocols for receiving and sending messages.
Routine Reporting Points

- Pre-run
- When dispatched
- Upon scene arrival
- At the scene to give an update
- Before scene departure
- Enroute to medical facility or destination
- Arrival at medical facility or destination
- When back in service
Operator Responsibility

- Safe and Efficient Operation of the Vehicle
- Only communicate during non-driving points when possible
Operator Information

- Address
- Description or Nature of call
Sending Messages

Radio Channels
- Know what each channel is for and when to use it.
- Remember patient privacy and do not communicate personal information over the radio
  - Patient Name
  - Patient Address
  - Patient Social Security Number
  - Etc
Sending Messages

Composing Messages
• Plan your message
• Identify person called, then calling unit
• Be brief and concise
• Use Plain English
• Pronounce words clearly
• Spell phonetically
• Repeat directions
# Sending Messages

## "Plain English" Messages

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## Sending Messages

**Phonetic Alphabet**

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Sending Messages

Phonetic Alphabet

“Smythe Street: Sierra Mike Yankee Tango Hotel Echo. Smythe”
Radio Transmission

• Listen
  • Listen to the frequency to be sure it is clear traffic. If others are talking, wait for them to sign off before using the frequency.

• Depress microphone key
  • Press the microphone transmit key for a half second before speaking. If you're too quick to begin talking, your first word or syllable may be cut off.

• Talk with mouth close to microphone
  • Keep your mouth close to the microphone, no more than 1-1/2 inches away.

• Clear frequency
  • Clear the frequency when you finish. The word "out" is a standard way to signal the end of a radio transmission.
Questions ???
Lesson 4

Ambulance Types and Operation
Star of Life
Star of Life

The "Star of Life" emblem may be displayed on the ambulance when the manufacturer certifies to the purchaser that the ambulance, its components and equipment meet or exceed the tests in the KKK specification.
The KKK-A-1822C Federal Specification standards, published by the General Services Administration (GSA), recognize three types of ambulances--Type I, Type II, and Type III.
TYPE I AMBULANCE

- Body type: Conventional Truck, Cab-Chassis with Modular Body Ambulance
- Service Capacity: Basic Life Support (BLS) or Advanced Life Support (ALS)
- Classes: Class 1 – 2 rear wheel drive, Class 2- 4 wheel drive
TYPE II AMBULANCE

- Body type: Standard van, integral cab-body ambulance
- Service Capacity: Basic Life Support (BLS) or Advanced Life Support (ALS)
- Classes: Class 1 – 2 rear wheel drive, Class 2- 4 wheel drive
TYPE III AMBULANCE

- **Body type:** cutaway van, cab chassis with integral or containerized modular body ambulance
- **Service Capacity:** Basic Life Support (BLS) or Advanced Life Support (ALS)
- **Classes:** Class 1 – 2 rear wheel drive, Class 2- 4 wheel drive
No matter what type of ambulance you drive, you must know your ambulance's weight restrictions in order to operate safely during all driving conditions.
An ambulance is larger than a standard car.

It is wider, longer, and taller which makes it harder to maneuver.

The ambulance's width and length affects turning;

its height means you must be aware of height clearances.
Weight

- An ambulance may weigh more than a car.
- It takes longer to accelerate and brake.
- Does not accelerate as quickly
- Need more room to brake.
Visibility

- Blind spots
- Rely on side view mirrors
- Should always use a ground guide when backing up
Questions???
Safe Operating Condition

- inspecting the vehicle according to established procedures
- checking that all scheduled maintenance has been performed
- checking that all needed repairs have been made

- If a vehicle is **NOT** in a safe operating condition, you, as the operator have the responsibility to take the vehicle out of service until the problems have been fixed.
Major Mechanical Systems

- Engine Drive Train
- Cooling System
- Braking System
- Electrical System Auxiliary Power
- Environmental Control Systems
- Support Equipment
Inspections

By conducting regular, systematic vehicle inspections, you are able to:

• find and report problems that need to be fixed
• keep track of preventive maintenance requirements
• document the overall condition of the vehicle
Inspection Standards

• To ensure that vehicle inspections are consistent, thorough, and accurate, each EMS organization develops specific vehicle inspection procedures and checklists to meet its needs.

• Maintenance organizations must be able to document in writing the servicing, maintenance, and repair of their vehicles and equipment.
Inspection Types

• Quick Check – covers those systems that should be checked most often.

• Full check – covers all vehicle systems that can be checked without special equipment or facilities.
Inspection Sequence

• Overall Appearance
• Operator Compartment
• Exterior: Operator’s Side
• Exterior: Front
• Engine Compartment
• Exterior Passenger’s Side
• Patient Compartment
• Exterior: Rear
REMINDER!!!

• Your inspection should follow your agency’s SOP.
• Do not do more than you are authorized to do.
Operator Negligence

• Failing to inspect a vehicle thoroughly according to the organization’s requirements.

• Knowingly operating a vehicle with a problem that should have resulted in the vehicle being taken out of service.
Preventive Maintenance

• It ensures safe, reliable vehicle operations
• It reduces the total cost of repairs
• It minimizes major equipment failure
Operator Responsibility

- to document any needed maintenance you find
- to make sure needed maintenance has been completed before you place the vehicle in service
- to perform any maintenance for which your organization makes you responsible
Making Repairs

You should only perform repairs for which you are trained and authorized.
Malfunctions During a Run

- Are you trained and authorized to make the repair?
- Is a backup readily available?
- How quickly can you make the repair?
- What is the patient's condition?
- Can the vehicle's electrical system meet the demands made on it during the repair?
Questions ???
Lesson 6

Navigation and Route Planning
Safety

Safety is the most important factor when driving to the scene.
Route Planning

Route planning involves:

• learning the geographic and local conditions
• individual characteristics of the area
• your organization's procedures
Route Planning

• Minimize travel time
• Minimize crash exposure
• Allow operator to focus attention on driving
• Avoid environmental and construction hazards
Route Planning

Choose Routes that ..........

• Minimize stops and turns
• Avoid intersections
• Avoid residential streets
Route Planning

Primary and Alternate Routes

• When planning routes, primary and alternate routes should be identified
• Alternate routes must be available in case of bad road conditions, weather, or other situations that effect primary routes.
Route Planning

Know Your Area

• Primary and Alternate Routes
• New Construction
• Local Landmarks or reference points
• Traffic flow changes
Route Planning

Be aware of the following conditions of local roads and streets:

• Damage, potholes, badly rutted roads
• expressway utilization policies during rush hour or construction
• detours, closed roads
• speed bumps, dips, bumps
• areas of standing water
Route Planning

Be aware of the following conditions of local roads and streets:

- Damage, potholes, badly rutted roads
- Expressway utilization policies during rush hour or construction
- Detours, closed roads
- Speed bumps, dips, bumps
- Areas of standing water
Height Restrictions

When would ambulance height be important in route planning?

You should know the height of your ambulance (including the warning lights) in case you must go through or under a height-restricted area. There could be a bridge, tunnel, or parking ramp on your route.

Keep the height posted in the vehicle where you can quickly see it during the run.
Questions ???
Lesson 7

Basic Maneuvers & Normal Operating Situations
Road Surfaces

• Asphalt
• Concrete
• Dirt
• Gravel
Road Conditions

- Bumps
- Mud
- Potholes
- Bridges and Ramps
- Curves
- Crowns
- Water Drainage
Driving Effect on Patient

• Pain
• Fright
• anxiety
Driving Skills

Practicing these skills will enhance your patient’s ride:

• Cornering
• Braking
• Accelerating
• Maintaining Speed
Braking Time

Total Stopping Distance = Reaction Time + Braking Time
2 – 4 – 12 Rule

• maintain a 2 second interval between your ambulance and the vehicle ahead for speeds below 55 mph
• increase the following distance to 4 seconds when speeds get above 55 mph to allow for increased stopping distances at higher speeds
• give yourself a 12 second visual lead time. In other words, look ahead for possible hazards and alternate paths of travel should an emergency arise
Acceleration

• Accelerate smoothly and steadily
• Maintain appropriate speed.
• Slower = Smoother
Defensive Driving

Defensive driving means doing everything reasonably possible to avoid being involved in a preventable crash, regardless of what the law is, what the other driver does, or adverse driving conditions.
Safety Cushion

Empty space around the vehicle that allows

• Identifying Hazards
• Deciding Response
• Reacting Correctly
Multiple Responding Units

- Emergency units responding along the same route should maintain 300 to 400 feet of distance between them.
- To make sure the other motorists know there is more than one emergency unit in the area, use a different siren tone than the vehicle ahead of you.
Communicating with Other Drivers

- Lights
- Horn
- Eye Contact
- Hand Signals
- Siren
Crash Preparation

If a crash is inevitable there are a few steps you can take to reduce injury:

REDUCE
• Reduce your speed
• Reduce angle of impact
• Reduce the size and hardness of the object
Basic Driving Maneuvers

• Braking & Stopping
• Making Lane Changes
• Passing
• Backing
• Parking
• Turning
Braking and Stopping

• Pump brakes gently but firmly
• Check conditions to rear and side
• Search 12 seconds ahead
Making Lane Changes

• Plan ahead
• Signal intentions and look for reactions
• Gently steer into new lane
Passing – Two Lane Roads

• Visually clear oncoming lane
• Change lanes
• Accelerate past vehicle
• Smoothly pull back into lane
Pass Stopped Traffic

Only after you know why traffic has stopped.
Backing

- Use ground guide at left rear
- Keep guide in view at all times
- Use side mirrors
- Accelerate slowly
Urban Driving

- Surrounded by traffic
- Constantly changing speeds
- Traffic entering and exiting
- You must be at your peak of alertness to safely drive in heavy urban traffic
- Partner should assist in looking for potential threats
- Partner should operate ra
Rural Driving

- Be alert for loose livestock and pets.
- Be alert for bicyclists, school buses, and children waiting for buses.
- Be alert for slow-moving vehicles, such as tractors, farm equipment, trucks, and horses and buggies.
Questions ???
Lesson 8

Operations in Emergency Mode
Emergency Driving

Using clearly defined procedures in the operation of an ambulance when responding to a medical emergency, including the use of emergency signaling devices, such as lights and siren.
Emergency Lights and Siren

- Notify other drivers that an emergency vehicle is approaching
- Request that the other drivers yield the right of way to the ambulance
Physiological Response

- Run to the ambulance
- Increases adrenaline rush
- Increases tension
- Increases potential driver problems
Speed Limits

• Follow State Laws and SOP guidance for speed limits.

• Operate at speeds which provide best ride, response, and patient care.
Law of Due Regard

A reasonably careful person performing similar duties and under similar circumstances would act in the same manner.
Intersections

- 60% of ambulance crashes occur at intersections with stop signs and traffic lights.
- Voluntary Standard created to clear intersections
National Voluntary Consensus

- Siren to wail 300 feet prior to intersection
- Siren to yelp 150 feet prior to intersection
- Brake to stop at crosswalk line
- Two blasts of air horn
- Stop, look, make eye contact, proceed
- Continue yelp mode, proceed with highest degree of care
- Clear each lane prior to crossing
- Anticipate vehicles entering from right and left
National Voluntary Consensus

• Anticipate multiple responding units
• Avoid passing stopped vehicles on the right
• Turn right after drivers on the right are aware of ambulance
• Anticipate left turns in front of ambulance by oncoming traffic
• Beware of other intersection hazards
Driving Against Traffic

• Do not enter opposing traffic lane until all oncoming vehicles are aware of ambulance’s presence
• Do not enter one way street against traffic until all opposing traffic has yielded right of way
Adverse Conditions

You must learn how to adjust your driving style to the existing conditions.

Two types of adverse conditions that we can adjust our driving style to accommodate are:

- Traction
- Vision
Adverse Conditions - Traction

Conditions that affect traction are:

• Rain
• Snow and Ice
• High Winds
• Leaves
Adverse Conditions – Traction - Rain

Rain affects traction in three ways:

• Hydroplaning – as little as 1/16 of an inch of water on the road surface can cause hydroplaning.
• Brakes – brakes can become wet and less effective.
• Standing Water – when only one side of the vehicle goes through the water the vehicle will tend to pull in that direction.
Adverse Conditions – Traction - Rain

Take the following actions with regard to rain:

• Slow down before hitting water. This will lessen the splashing and reduce the effects of hydroplaning giving you more control.

• Gently apply your brakes for a few moments as you exit the deeper puddles to heat the brake shoes and dry them. Until the brakes are dry, you will notice that it takes more foot pressure to stop the ambulance.
Adverse Conditions – Traction – Snow & Ice

• Snow and ice form an extremely slick barrier between your tires and the roadway. Extreme caution must be taken when driving on snow and ice to avoid sliding when turning, braking, and accelerating.

• Remember that in cold weather, bridges and shaded roadways freeze first. Often this freezing is nearly invisible and all bridges and shaded areas must be approached with caution.
Adverse Conditions – Traction – High Winds

- Cross-winds can blow the vehicle off the road or across the center line, particularly in curves and corners and especially when it's raining, snowing, or icy and traction with the road is already reduced.

- Wind shifts occur as you pass buildings, travel through an underpass, or pass large trucks. These shifts toss the ambulance first one way and then another. Reduced speed will lessen the effects of these wind shifts.
Adverse Conditions – Traction – Leaves

Wet leaves on the roadway can become as slick as ice or snow. If you cannot avoid driving through areas of wet leaves, slow down and treat them as you would a large patch of ice.
Adverse Conditions – Vision

Conditions that affect vision are:

• Night Driving
• Rain and Fog
• The Vehicle
Vision - Night

• Darkness conceals hazards and you must make decisions based on incomplete information.

• It is more difficult to judge the speed and position of another vehicle because you do not have distinct shadows and other objects as reference points.

• Your peripheral vision is reduced if you smoke. This makes it more difficult to judge the speed and position of other vehicles, especially at night.

• Adequate highway lighting is limited.

• Glare from roadside lighting and oncoming vehicle headlights impair your visibility.
Vision – Night Techniques

• Keep dash and panel lights dim for better vision, but always have enough light to read the speedometer.
• Reduce speed so that you can stop within the visible distance.
• Drive within the range of your headlights.
• Increase sight distance by keeping the headlights clean and properly aimed and the windshield clean.
• Watch beyond the headlights on or near the roadway for slow-moving or unlighted vehicles, curves, T-intersections, road obstructions or defects, trains, pedestrians, and animals.
• Keep your eyes moving so that your blind spot does not hide objects ahead.
Vision – Night Techniques

• Don't move immediately from a brightly-lit room to a dark vehicle and begin driving.
• Give your eyes a chance to adjust to the darkness.
• Avoid looking directly into glaring headlights of oncoming vehicles.
• The human eye takes about seven seconds to fully recover from being blinded by a bright light. At 60 mph, your ambulance would travel 616 feet in seven seconds.
Vision – Rain & Fog

Affects your visibility in two ways:

• Reduced visibility

• Glare
Vision – Vehicle

Affects your visibility:

• Windshield Wipers
• Visors
• Headlights
• Side View Mirrors
Crash Avoidance

• Plan ahead to avoid a crash
• Secure your equipment
• Wear seat belts
• Mentally prepare yourself
• Maintain rear and side space cushion
• Use a ground guide
Vehicle Malfunctions

- Tire Blowouts
- Brake Failure
- Steering Failure
- Stuck Accelerator
- Released Hood
Questions ???
Lesson 9

Special Considerations
Person in charge of the vehicle is responsible for the safety of:

- passengers
- crew
- vehicle
- Fire apparatus will typically have an officer in the right seat who is in charge

*Every vehicle should have a person in charge*
Responsibility For Families

Transporting, Ensuring Safety, Communications, Assistance
Potential Dangers

- Fires
- HAZMAT
- Crowds
- Violent Acts
- Traffic
- Downed Power Lines
HazMat
Fire
Crowds
Downed Power Lines
Vehicle Placement

- Safety
- Traffic Flow
- Ease of Departure
- Distance from Scene or Patient
- Incident Commander should direct all vehicle at the scene
Flare Placement
Warning Triangle
Placement of Triangles
Summary

• Coordinate EVOC procedures with your SOP
• Personnel should not have to guess at action to take for any situation
• Ride along supervisory checks
Questions ???
Lesson 10

The Run
Operator Readiness
Inspecting Vehicles
Intersections
Clearing Controlled Intersection

(1 of 2)

• Siren to wail 300 feet before
• Yelp 150 feet before
• Remove foot from accelerator
• Start braking
• Two blasts airhorn
Look left, front, right, and left
Make eye contact all drivers
When all clear, proceed under 10 mph
Continue yelp through intersection
Cautions

• Watch for drivers who don’t hear warnings
• Do not enter intersection controlled by another emergency vehicle
• Avoid passing on right
• Beware of hazards at intersections
Difficult Situation
Downed Power Lines
Crowds
Parking Safety
Predeparture
Fright
Postrun
Questions ???
End of Course