

## **CAAS Vehicle Standards Development- CAAS GVS 2015**

### **Executive Summary**

The Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS) is a not for profit organization that accredits Ambulance Services in North America. CAAS has created standards for the operation of ambulance services, for both the public and private sector. These ambulance operating standards are highly regarded, and many states have adopted them for purposes of inspection and certification. They are considered to be the Gold Standard in North America. CAAS has identified that there is a general need for a universally acceptable national Ground Ambulance Vehicle Standard within the United States.

### **Organization**

The Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services is made up of a multi-disciplinary Board of Directors representing the American Ambulance Association, National Association of EMT's, American College of Emergency Physicians, National Association of EMS Physicians, International Association of Fire Chiefs, and National Association of State EMS Officials. In addition, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is represented by a non-voting liaison.

We are led by an Executive Director, and supported by a professional management organization. CAAS also has Panel of Commissioners and Site Reviewers who perform accreditation inspection and compliance verification.

All ambulance systems are eligible for the three-year accreditation including private, public, fire department, and hospital-based providers. Approximately 150 North American ambulance providers are currently accredited by CAAS. These accredited agencies serve transport over 10 million people annually.

### **Services**

CAAS currently provides accreditation to all ambulance services in North America. Emergency Medical Service providers apply for accreditation by complying with the broad array of ambulance operating standards that have been developed by CAAS. The process includes a comprehensive self-assessment and an independent external review of the EMS organization. The external review includes an on-site evaluation performed by CAAS site reviewers. The reviewers verify compliance to the ambulance standards and make a recommendation to the CAAS Panel of Commissioners. The CAAS Panel of Commissioners recommends accreditation of the ambulance service if it is in compliance with these Gold Ambulance Operating Standards.

### **History**

Ambulance Vehicle Standards have been historically promulgated by the Federal Government through the General Services Administration (GSA) purchasing standard *KKK-A-1822F*. Originally published in 1974, the specification became the de facto general standard for purchase and manufacture of ambulances throughout the United States, used by both public and private sector providers. The Federal Government has decided that it will no longer maintain the KKK standard after September 2015. This decision will require some other organization to develop a consensus based ambulance vehicle standard.

ASTM International, formerly known as the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), previously developed vehicle and equipment specifications which were never accepted by the industry, in part because of the existence and general use of the KKK specifications at the time. The ASTM specifications have not been adopted by any State, and the specifications themselves have not been updated since XXXX.

The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) has been developing a consensus based ambulance vehicle standard over the past two years and has now published *NFPA-1917*. Although the NFPA process was originally based on consensus building by different ambulance related industries, organizations and agencies, the final product has not proven to be a universally acceptable national Ground Ambulance Vehicle Standard within the United States.

Currently, no State has adopted the new NFPA standard. This lack of adoption is likely due to the inability of NFPA to address concerns in regards to safety, efficiency, and technology to the broad spectrum of the EMS community (e.g. Fire-Based, Public, Private, Volunteer, Hospital, Aero-Medical, Industrial, et al).

The decision of States not to accept the NFPA Standard indicates a need for development of a more universally acceptable ambulance vehicle standard developed and administered by a credible multi-disciplinary EMS organization. This standard should be consensus based and meet the needs of all EMS providers in North America.

### **Current Situation**

CAAS has been identified by several EMS associations as the appropriate organization to develop and maintain a consensus based ground ambulance vehicle standard. CAAS's Board of Directors is multi-disciplinary and represents the broad spectrum of the EMS industry. After a meeting with key industry association leaders, there was general support for CAAS to move forward in developing a Ground Ambulance Vehicle Standard. Participants in this meeting included representatives of NAEMT, AAA, NASEMSO, NEMSMA, AMD, IAFC and CAAS. This document contains a recommendation on how to proceed with this initiative.

### **Guiding Principles**

These key industry association leaders believe that a ground ambulance vehicle standard should be developed by consensus of a broad group representing EMS manufacturers, providers, regulators, et al.

In addition, they believe this process should be based upon "Guiding Principles." These Guiding Principles would be applied to the ground ambulance vehicle standard as it is developed and maintained. These guiding principles are as follows:

- Ensures Safety of the patient, provider and community
- Ensures Quality of the ambulance design
- Supports and enhances the quality of patient care and patient movement
- Establishes performance-based design standard
- Supports efficient EMS operations
- Promotes fiscal efficiency and cost benefit analysis
- Incorporates relevant emerging technologies

### **Development of a New Ground Ambulance Vehicle Standard-“CAAS GVS-2015”**

The key industry association leaders believe that a formal adoption of the current KKK specification as well as the latest applicable NIOSH/NIST/SAE ambulance safety standards and research would be an excellent starting point to develop the new ground ambulance vehicle standard (CAAS GVS-2015). This will require CAAS to obtain a legal opinion on issues related to this process. Also, legal counsel will need to be obtained to determine any liability CAAS may incur by developing and maintaining a ground ambulance vehicle standard.

CAAS would establish a broad-based consensus committee of industry leaders representing the stakeholders of the industry. This includes a broad group representing EMS manufacturers, providers, regulators, et al. This committee would develop and maintain the new Ground Ambulance Vehicle Standard, named “**CAAS-GVS-2015**,” based on the guiding principles above. This process is projected to be completed by January 2015. Committee members would serve voluntarily on the CAAS GVS-2015 committee.

In order to establish a true consensus-based committee, the following industry associations, groups and agencies shall be notified of the intent of CAAS and asked to provide two volunteer representatives (one primary and one alternate) to participate:

Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS)  
American Ambulance Association (AAA)  
National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)  
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT)  
National Emergency Medical Services Management Association (NEMSMA)  
International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)  
Ambulance Manufacturers Division (AMD)  
American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)  
National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians (NAEMSP)  
Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS)  
National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)

In addition, the following governmental agencies will also be invited to participate:

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)  
General Services Administration (GSA)  
Health and Human Services (HHS)  
National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)  
Department of Homeland Security (DHS)  
Transportation Research Board (TRB)

All Federal entities represented will have the option to participate as a voting or non-voting member.

A non-voting project manager/editor will also be identified and tasked with the organizing and development of the proposed standard. CAAS will follow all ANSI essential guidelines and requirements for the development and approval of consensus based-standards, including open comment periods, feedback assessments and integration, and consensus-body voting .

### **Maintenance of the New Standard**

Once GVS-2015 has been developed and published, the standard would be updated every 3 years by the committee. This committee would convene every 3 years to update and maintain the standard. A process would be developed for any necessary amendments outside of the cycle. Any and all amendments and revisions will follow ANSI essential guidelines and requirements.

CAAS would administer and support GVS-2015 with regard to inquiries, comments, publication, marketing, etc. It is believed that this ongoing maintenance will be nominal in cost.

### **Proposed Timeline for the New Standard**

- Jan 2014--CAAS Board approves business plan for ground vehicle ambulance standard
- Feb 2014—Legal review of adoption of current KKK and other legal issues
  - Key industry leaders meet to select GVS-2015 committee members
- Mar 2014--CAAS announces development of ground ambulance vehicle std-GVS-2015
- Mar 2014 to Sept 2014--Committee develops new standard
- Sep 2014—Public Comment period on draft standard
- Oct 2014--CAAS publishes new standard with effective date of January 1, 2015
  - Ongoing maintenance of the ambulance vehicle standard by CAAS
- Nov 2014--CAAS markets GVS-2015

--CAAS promotes standards to State EMS Directors for state adoption  
-Jan 2015—GVS-2015 becomes effective

### **Conclusion**

Key industry leaders agree that CAAS is the logical organization to develop and maintain a new ambulance vehicle design standard. CAAS is currently recognized as an organization that promotes a high level of standards in the EMS industry. The ambulance vehicle is a vital piece of equipment for the ambulance industry and protecting the safety of patients, providers and the community through the development and administration of the national EMS vehicle standard would be a natural fit for CAAS. Adoption of this proposal by the CAAS Board will guarantee that ambulances will meet the high standards necessary to protect the safety and reliability of the ambulance crews, their patients and the community.