



The Definition of EMS

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is the integrated system of medical response established and designed to respond, assess, treat, monitor, observe, and determine the disposition of patients with injury or illness and those in need of medically safe transportation. Although health care is its primary focus, EMS is a vital component of public health and emergency preparedness systems. The EMS system includes the full spectrum of response from recognition of the emergency to access of the healthcare system, dispatch of an appropriate response, pre-arrival instructions, direct patient care by trained personnel, and appropriate transport or disposition. Anyone participating in any component of this response system is practicing EMS. EMS also includes, but is not limited to, medical response to disasters and mass casualties, mass gathering events, as well as interfacility transfer of patients.

EMS is the practice of medicine and as such, any of the activities that constitute EMS require oversight by a physician.

EMS does not include the following:

- Good Samaritan care: emergency care provided by someone regardless of their level of training and experience outside of an established and organized response and the individual is not receiving any type of compensation for care rendered.
- Basic first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and public access defibrillator use provided outside the established EMS system.
- Care, unrelated to the EMS system, rendered by professionals within an established healthcare facility.
- Public health programs and home health care programs unaffiliated with the EMS system.

This definition is not intended to exclude any aspects of EMS not formally described (e.g., oversight, administration, education, and research). EMS is an evolving discipline. As a maturing partner in the healthcare system, EMS must, as it always has in the past, remain flexible to accommodate new roles.