

SCENE SAFETY GUIDELINES

Criteria:

- A. This guideline applies to every EMS response, particularly if dispatch information or initial scene size-up suggests:
 - 1. Violent patient or bystanders
 - 2. Weapons involved
 - 3. Industrial accident or MVA with potential hazardous materials
 - 4. Patient(s) contaminated with chemicals

System requirements:

- A. These guidelines provide general information related to scene safety. These guidelines are not designed to supersede an EMS Provider's policy regarding management of staff' safety, but this general information may augment the EMS Provider's policy.
- B. These guidelines do not comprehensively cover all possible situations, and EMS practitioner judgment should be used when the EMS Provider's policy does not provide specific direction.

Procedure:

A. If violence or weapons are anticipated:

- 1. EMS personnel should wait for law enforcement officers to secure scene before entry.
- 2. Avoid entering the scene alone.¹

B. If violence is encountered or threatened, retreat to a safe place if possible and await law enforcement. **MVAs, Industrial Accidents, Hazardous Materials situations:**

- 1. General considerations:
 - a. Obtain as much information as possible prior to arrival on the scene.
 - b. Look for hazardous materials, placards, labels, spills, and/or containers (spilling or leaking). Consider entering scene from uphill/upwind.
 - c. Look for downed electrical wires.
 - d. Call for assistance, as needed.
- 2. Upon approach of scene, look for place to park vehicle:
 - a. Uphill and uphill of possible fuel spills and hazardous materials.
 - b. Park in a manner that allows for rapid departure.
 - c. Allows for access for fire/rescue and other support vehicles.
- 3. Safety:
 - a. Consider placement of flares/warning devices.²
 - b. Avoid entering a damaged/disabled vehicle until it is stabilized.
 - c. Do not place your EMS vehicle so that its lights blind oncoming traffic.
 - d. Use all available lights to light up scene on all sides of your vehicle.
 - e. PPE is suggested for all responders entering vehicle or in area immediately around involved vehicle(s) and universal precautions should be taken when treating any patient.
 - f. All EMS personnel should wear ANSI compliant high-visibility reflective outerwear at scenes along roadways when required by federal regulation 23 CFR 634. EMS Providers should consider a policy requiring all EMS personnel to wear high-visibility outerwear at all times when on an EMS call and outside of a vehicle.

C. Parked Vehicles (non-crash scenes):

- 1. Position EMS vehicle:
 - a. Behind vehicle, if possible, in a manner that allows rapid departure and maximum safety of EMS Personnel.
 - b. Turn headlights on high beam and utilize spotlights aimed at rear view mirror.
 - c. Inform the dispatch center, by radio, of the vehicle type, state and number of license plate and number of occupants **prior** to approaching the suspect vehicle.
- 2. One person approaches vehicle:
 - a. If at night, use a flashlight in the hand that is away from the vehicle and your body.

- b. Proceed slowly toward the driver's seat; keep your body as close as possible to the vehicle (less of a target). Stay behind the "B" post and use it as cover.³
 - c. Ensure trunk of vehicle is secured; push down on it as you walk by.
 - d. Check for potential weapons and persons in back seat.
 - 1) Never stand directly to the side or in front of the persons in the front seat.
 - e. Never stand directly in front of a vehicle.
3. Patients:
- a. Attempt to arouse victim by tapping on roof/window.
 - b. Identify yourself as an EMS practitioner.
 - c. Ask what the problem is.
 - d. Don't let patient reach for anything.
 - e. Ask occupants to remain in the vehicle until you tell them to get out.
- D. Residence scenes with suspected violent individuals:**
- 1. Approach of scene:
 - a. Attempt to ascertain, via radio communications, whether authorized personnel have declared the scene under control prior to arrival.
 - b. Do not enter environments that have not been determined to be secure or that have been determined unsafe.
 - 1) Consider waiting for police if dispatched for an assault, stabbing, shooting, etc.
 - c. Shut down warning lights and sirens one block or more before reaching destination.
 - d. Park in a manner that allows rapid departure.
 - e. Park 100' prior to or past the residence.
 - 2. Arrival on scene:
 - a. Approach residence on an angle.
 - b. Listen for sounds; screaming, yelling, gun shots.
 - c. Glance through window, if available. Avoid standing directly in front of a window or door.
 - d. Carry portable radio, but keep volume low.
 - e. If you decide to leave, walk backward to vehicle.
 - 3. Position at door:
 - a. Stand on the knob side of door; do not stand in front of door.
 - b. Knock and announce yourself.
 - c. When someone answers door – have him or her lead the way to the patient.
 - d. Open door all the way and look through the doorjamb.
 - 4. Entering the residence:
 - a. Scan room for potential weapons.
 - b. Be wary of kitchens (knives, glass, caustic cleaners, etc.).
 - c. Observe for alternative exits.
 - d. Do not let anyone get between you and the door, or back you into a corner.
 - e. Do not let yourself get locked in.
 - 5. Deteriorating situations:
 - a. Leave (with or without patient).
 - b. Walk backwards from the scene and do not turn your back.
 - c. Meet police at an intersection or nearby landmark, not a residence.
 - d. Do not take sides or accuse anyone of anything.
- E. Lethal weapons:**
- 1. Do not move firearms (loaded or unloaded) unless it poses a potential immediate threat.
 - 2. Secure any weapon that can be used against you or the crew out of the reach of the patient and bystanders
 - a. Guns should be handed over to a law enforcement officer if possible or placed in a locked space, when available.

- 1) If necessary for scene security, safely move firearm keeping finger off of the trigger and hammer and keeping barrel pointed in a safe direction away from self and others.
 - 2) Do not unload a gun.
- b. Knives should be placed in a locked place, when available.
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Notes:

1. Each responder should carry a portable radio, if available.
2. Flares should not be used in the vicinity of flammable materials.
3. Avoid side and rear doors when approaching a van. Vans should be approached from the front right corner.
4. Special thank you to Douglas Kupas MD, State EMS Medical Director for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in developing this guideline.