

# MEDICAL CARE COMMITTEE

## AMBULANCE SAFETY

### FACTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

APRIL 25, 2007

#### FACTS (*Facts based mostly on the research and lectures of Nadine Levick MD*)

- EMS has 2x the National Average for vehicle fatalities
- #1 cause of death in the EMS work place
- 5,000 crashes/year
- 1 fatality/week
- 10 serious injuries/day
- Cost = \$500 million/yr (>than malpractice/negligence)
- 74 % EMS fatalities are transportation related
- #1 cause of fatalities is *vehicle vs. vehicle at intersection* (2x greater with intersections that have a traffic light)
- Most serious injuries and most fatalities occur in the rear compartment
- Rear compartment in ambulances is exempt from Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS)
- 82% rear fatalities are unrestrained
- >65% of fatalities are from serious head injuries
- Navy **blue** is the most difficult color to see at night (*common color of EMS jump suits*)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Participate in a basic vehicle safety program such as EVOG
- Annually update safety programs based on statistical reports that identify the major risks
- Develop and mandate a safety SOG for approaching intersections during Emergency responses
- Equip crew seats and passenger seats with safety belts similar to those used in Air Ambulances
- Properly restrain patients during transport and transport with the stretcher in the Fowler position when possible
- When ordering a new ambulance, safely spec the rear compartment so there are no sharp edges or projections that would put the crew at risk during transport or a potential collision. Use best practices and/or injury analysis to determine this
- Design systems to safely secure equipment and oxygen bottles during transport and have a written policy for their use
- Consider safety helmets for the rescue crews during response, while on the scene (especially traffic accidents), and during transport
- Develop a public education and prevention program addressing the common causes of accidents on rescue scenes in a given jurisdiction
- Wear reflective safety vests on accident scenes, especially at night and conditions of limited visibility
- Consider using a “black box” program that monitors driving habits and provides feedback to the driver, so safety improvements can be identified and implemented. It also provides feedback from data recorded during an accident, so prevention strategies can be developed and implemented