

## **National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians Position Statement on Illicit Drug Use by EMTs and Paramedics**

### **Statement**

NAEMT strongly opposes illicit drug use by EMTs, Paramedics and other emergency medical services professionals.

NAEMT urges EMS services to adopt a zero-tolerance policy on illicit drug use by EMTs, Paramedics and other emergency medical services professionals.

NAEMT urges EMS services to use proactive means to identify field personnel who steal medications of any sort from patients and/or healthcare agencies (ambulance, hospital, nursing home, etc.)

NAEMT urges EMS services to employ all necessary safeguards to adequately track medications and their use on the ambulance

NAEMT urges EMS services to use proactive means to identify field providers who use illicit drugs on the job or in any capacity that has the potential to impair job performance.

NAEMT urges EMS services to adopt policies that establish objective guidelines for reasonable suspicion of drug-impaired job performance. This policy must be consistently and fairly applied. If alcohol or drugs are present in testing, counseling and treatment resources should be provided.

NAEMT urges EMS services to be proactive by providing their employees with access to Employee Assistance Programs. This proactive approach may help prevent employees from using illicit drugs on the job by developing tools to deal with the day-to day stress of EMS work.

### **Background**

Despite fairly widespread belief, emergency medical services (EMS) is not immune to workplace substance abuse. EMS workers who use illicit drugs threaten the safety and well being of not only themselves, but their colleagues and a countless number of patients.

NAEMT has formally adopted and believes in the EMT/Paramedic Code of Ethics, which sets forth standards by which the association expects its members and all EMS professionals to abide. That Code asserts that a fundamental responsibility of the Emergency Medical Technician is to conserve life, to alleviate suffering, to promote health, to do no harm, and to encourage the quality and equal availability of emergency medical care.

Substance abuse by EMTs/Paramedics puts the lives of the EMS professional, co-workers, patients and the general public in danger, in violation of this principle.

The NAEMT Code of Ethics asserts that the EMT/Paramedic must understand and uphold the law and perform the duties of citizenship; as a professional, the Emergency Medical Technician has the never-ending responsibility to work with concerned citizens and other health care professionals in promoting a high standard of emergency medical care to all people.

Substance abuse by EMTs/Paramedics violates the law and endangers the ability of the EMT/Paramedic and other emergency response professionals to provide a high standard of emergency medical care.

The NAEMT Code of Ethics asserts that the EMT/Paramedic shall maintain professional competence and demonstrate concern for the competence of other members of the Emergency Medical Services health care team.

Substance abuse by EMTs/Paramedics compromises the ability of the EMT/Paramedic to perform professionally and competently and demonstrates a lack of concern for the competence of other members of the Emergency Medical Services health care team.

The NAEMT Code of Ethics requires the EMT/Paramedic to assume responsibility in defining and upholding standards of professional practice and education.

Substance abuse by EMTs/Paramedics violates the standards of professional practice.

The NAEMT Code of Ethics demands that the EMT/Paramedic assume responsibility for individual professional actions and judgment, both in dependent and independent emergency functions, and knows and upholds the laws which affect the practice of the Emergency Medical Technician.

Substance abuse by EMTs/Paramedics is an irresponsible action that indicates poor judgment and a lack of professionalism that suggests disrespect for the laws and for the profession.

*Adopted: April 18, 2007*