



NAEMT Position Accurate Counting of the EMS Workforce

Position:

NAEMT believes that our nation's emergency medical services (EMS) workforce should be accurately counted by the federal government in order to adequately plan for current and future system needs and ensure that our EMS system has the capacity to respond to large scale natural and manmade disasters. Understanding the current size of the EMS workforce is a prerequisite for planning for the future.

Background:

The public maintains a high expectation for the timely provision of EMS by appropriately trained and credentialed personnel. Currently no single data repository exists for identifying how many individuals comprise the EMS workforce in the United States. Estimates provided within federal publications have ranged from 196,880ⁱ to 826, 111ⁱⁱ. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has noted that the, "inability to accurately estimate EMS workforce size is a fundamental problem for EMS workforce planning and will hamper the ability to anticipate future EMS workforce needs."ⁱⁱⁱ Despite this issue having been previously identified as significant by the federal governmentⁱ no federal agency provides a full and accurate count of the EMS workforce.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in their Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)^{iv} identified the number of EMTs and Paramedics at 248,000 in 2016, and predicts the addition of 37,400 EMT and Paramedic jobs between 2016 and 2026^v. The BLS currently does not distinguish between EMTs and paramedics in their classification. Combining EMTs and Paramedics within the classification system is problematic because EMTs and paramedics have a drastically different scope of clinical practice, and compensation levels. Furthermore, the number identified by the BLS represents an extreme undercounting of the EMS workforce because it does not include firefighters who also work as credentialed EMTs and paramedics within their fire departments. As approximately 40% of all EMS agencies are fire departmentsⁱⁱ, the exclusion of firefighter-EMTs and firefighter-paramedics results in a severe underreporting of the number of individuals providing EMS as part of their job duties. The BLS data also fails to count EMS volunteers, who represent a significant proportion of the EMS workforce in rural EMS systems across the country and in many communities in states on the U.S. east coast.

NAEMT participated in a comprehensive coalition of organizations representing all sectors of EMS which provided comment to the BLS on July 17, 2014^{vi} and again on September 19, 2016^{vii} calling for the inclusion of firefighter-EMTs, firefighter-paramedics, and EMS volunteers to the count of EMTs/paramedics, and also urged the BLS to separate out EMTs from paramedics in

their classification reporting. While the final 2018 SOC was announced in November 28, 2017^{viii} indicated that EMTs would be counted separately from paramedics, to date the BLS has taken no action to implement this change. Unfortunately, the BLS did not respond to the EMS industry's request to count all EMTs and paramedics in their EMS workforce numbers.

In addition to responding to the daily needs of our communities, EMS has been identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Assistance Secretary for Preparedness and Response as an essential “pillar” of our nation’s National Health Security Strategy^{ix}, and a critical component of our nation’s disaster response^x. The lack of an accurate count of the current U.S. EMS workforce creates a potential gap in our national security, as expectations for emergency medical response to public health emergencies and natural or manmade disasters that are national or regional in scope are based on a belief in the EMS system’s ability to respond rather than data supporting its capacity to actually do so.

Once an accurate count of the EMS workforce is achieved, the next step to ensuring that our EMS workforce has the capacity to respond to current and future needs would be an analysis to determine what size of the EMS workforce is required to meet our needs, including a national consensus on expectations for EMS response during public health emergencies and natural and manmade disasters.

References

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, EMTs and Paramedics, on the Internet at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/emts-and-paramedics.htm> (visited May 28, 2019).

ⁱ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *EMS Workforce for the 21st Century: A National Assessment* (2008). Available at https://www.ems.gov/pdf/EMSWorkforceReport_June2008.pdf (accessed June 19, 2019).

ⁱⁱ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *EMS System Demographics. 2011 National EMS Assessment Research Note*. (Report No. DOT HS 812 041). Available at https://www.ems.gov/pdf/National_EMS_Assessment_Demographics_2011.pdf (accessed June 19, 2019).

ⁱⁱⁱ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *The Emergency Medical Services Workforce Agenda for the Future* (Report No. DOT HS 811 473). Available at https://www.ems.gov/pdf/2011/EMS_Workforce_Agenda_052011.pdf (accessed June 19, 2019).

^{iv} Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Occupational Classification. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/soc/2018/#classification>. (accessed June 19, 2019).

^v Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook. EMTs and Paramedics. Available at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/emts-and-paramedics.htm> (accessed June 19, 2019).

^{vi} Joint National EMS Leadership Comment to SOCP, July 21, 2014. Available at http://www.naemt.org/docs/default-source/advocacy-documents/letters-and-comments/final-jnemsif-letter-to-socpc-7-21-14.pdf?Status=Temp&sfvrsn=f419d692_2

^{vii} Joint National EMS Leadership Comment to SOCP, September 19, 2016. Available at <http://www.naemt.org/docs/default-source/advocacy-documents/letters-and-comments/jnemsif-comments-to-dol-bls-9-19-16.pdf?status=Temp&sfvrsn=0.05285827553389244>.

^{viii} Final 2018 Standard Occupational Classification. Available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/11/28/2017-25622/standard-occupational-classification-soc-system-revision-for-2018>.

^{ix} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *National Health Security Strategy Implementation Plan 2019-2022*. Available at <https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/authority/nhss/Documents/2019-2022-nhss-ip-v508.pdf> (accessed June 19, 2019).

^x National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians. DHS Supports EMS as a Valuable Piece of Our Nation's Security. Available at http://www.naemt.org/WhatsNewALLNEWS/14-0519/DHS_Supports_EMS_As_A_Valuable_Piece_Of_Our_Nation_s_Security.aspx (accessed June 19, 2019).

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