



SPRING 2024

NAEMT NEWS

A quarterly publication of the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians

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May 19-25
- 16** Become Your Agency's EMS
Safety Officer (ESO)
- 20** Learn from Trauma Care
Trailblazers at the World
Trauma Symposium

The Impact of Extreme Weather Events on EMS – And How to Prepare

It's early spring. Much of the United States is still shaking off the last of winter's chill. It can be hard to imagine that we're just nine months removed from the hottest summer ever recorded on the planet¹.

In 2023, temperature records fell across broad swaths of the country and the globe. Other forms of extreme weather disrupted lives and caused billions of dollars of damage too.

By the end of 2023, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) counted 28 separate weather or climate disasters that caused at least \$1 billion in damages². NOAA's list included the floods in the Northeast in July, the firestorms that devastated Maui, and

Hurricane Idalia that crashed into Florida in August.

EMS faces new risks and challenges

As with other disasters, EMS is on the frontlines of response to extreme weather events. EMS practitioners provide critical care to victims, and help communities recover.

Compounding those well-known challenges: Extreme weather is becoming more frequent, and in some cases

more intense, said Sunny Wescott, lead meteorologist at the Cyber and Critical Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The uptick in extreme weather events means the EMS workforce and operations will need to adapt, Wescott said.

The years 1980 to 2022 averaged eight \$1 billion events annually (adjusted for today's dollars). Compare that to the 18 that occurred annually during the four years between 2018 to 2022.

NOAA's \$1 billion list for 2023? One



8 Tips for Getting Ready Now and Planning for the Future

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drought, four flooding events, 19 severe storms, two tropical cyclones, one wildfire event and one winter storm.

New pathogens and infrastructure damage

Severe weather and climate change can expose EMS to disease-carrying pests and pathogens they may

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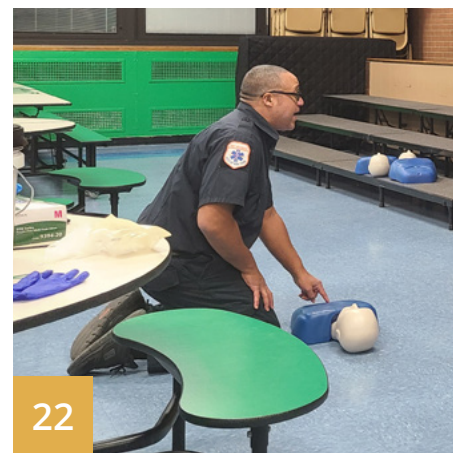


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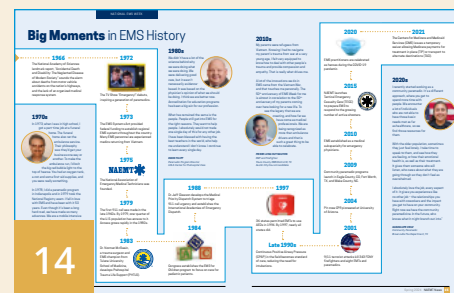
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NATIONAL EMS WEEK

*Celebrating 50 Years of National
EMS Week May 19 – 25*



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Big Moments in EMS History

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Advocacy Takes All of Us

By Susan Bailey, MSEM, NRP

As this issue of *NAEMT News* arrives in mailboxes, NAEMT will be welcoming our

nation's EMS professionals to Washington, D.C., for EMS On The Hill Day.

The annual event provides an opportunity for EMS to meet with members of Congress, helping them understand what EMS is, and the essential service we provide in our communities. In telling our stories, we build support for legislation that enables us to deliver the best possible care for our patients, and have a strong, safe and healthy EMS workforce.

I've participated in EMS On The Hill Day since 2016. The event is always one of the highlights of my year. I'm never more proud of our members, or of being a part of the EMS profession, than when I see us come together as "one EMS" to advocate for our colleagues and our patients.

Connection and inspiration

Every year, participants in EMS On The Hill Day tell us they come away feeling more connected with their EMS family from around the nation. They feel inspired by joining forces with others who are also passionate about advocating for EMS.

When we sit down with members of Congress and their legislative aides, and we experience them listening attentively and asking questions, EMS On The Hill Day participants know they are making a difference.

Ever since I started going to EMS On The Hill Day, the issues we've advocated for have felt urgent. It feels even more so today.

I am constantly hearing from my EMS colleagues about the continued strain of workforce shortages, or another

EMS agency on the brink of closure. Then there's the very real mental health challenges so many of us face as a result of the stress that comes with working in EMS and, well, the stresses of living. They are clear signals to me that the work we do on Capitol Hill to secure more resources and more support for EMS has never mattered more.

I'm never more proud of our members, or of being a part of the EMS profession, than when I see us come together as "one EMS" to advocate for our colleagues and our patients.

Rural EMS funding crisis

Some of the most dire funding shortages are in rural areas. One of our top priorities is reauthorization of the Rural EMS Training, Equipment and Assistance Grant program, also known as the SIREN grants, at an increased funding level from the prior amount of \$10.5 million in fiscal year 2023. In November, the Senate voted to reauthorize the SIREN Act grants for another five years, from 2024 to 2028, an important step forward. The grants are administered through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

We know these grants are having an impact. Since 2018, nearly 100 communities have received these funds. Agencies have told us that the grants have helped them train personnel to fill shortages, and purchase updated equipment and supplies that they could not have done otherwise.

Kelly Russ, chief of Putnam County EMS in Indiana, said the grants enabled her agency to overhaul outdated training equipment. They replaced cardiac

monitors, rhythm generators, SIM mannequins, low frequency/high fidelity incident trainers, and made technology upgrades in their classrooms. These have paid dividends for the entire region.

The grants "have not only addressed our immediate equipment needs but have also propelled us toward becoming a vital hub for training in our region," she said.

Dan DeSmet of the Upper Sioux Community in Granite Falls, Minnesota, said he's been able to train new EMTs, supply first responder units with naloxone, and launch a community paramedicine and EMS telehealth program with an area hospital.

"The SAMHSA Rural EMS Training Grants are allowing a small service to collaborate on new ideas that support not only our community, but the communities around us," he said.

NAEMT, in collaboration with other national EMS organizations, is strongly advocating for legislation that would direct Medicare to reimburse EMS for the care we provide, as opposed to only the transport we supply.

Reimbursement reform

The grants are certainly beneficial for our rural agencies. But to sustain all of EMS, we need across-the-board reimbursement reform – namely, payment for treatment in place (TIP) and transport to alternate destinations (TAD).

NAEMT, in collaboration with other national EMS organizations, is strongly advocating for legislation that would direct Medicare to reimburse EMS for the care we provide, as opposed to only the transport we supply. ➔

This has been a long-time goal of the EMS profession. Support for TIP and TAD legislation is building. During EMS On The Hill Day, we will continue to educate members of Congress about TIP and TAD, how it benefits patients, and why reimbursing EMS for TIP and TAD will ultimately result in cost savings for Medicare.

Payment for TIP and TAD will mean EMS is finally fully recognized for our actual role in health care and in our communities.

How you can help

Whether or not you'll be joining us in Washington, D.C., there are important ways that you can contribute to EMS advocacy.

Please use our Online Legislative Service at naemt.org > Advocacy > Online Legislative Service. In literal seconds, you can send a request to your senator or representative asking them to support key EMS legislation, including the EMS Counts Act, reauthorization of the SIREN Act and others.

These notes are pre-written. Sometimes people think that if the message is already written for you, it doesn't make a difference. But we know that legislators often want to know how many of their constituents they've heard from on an issue.

So taking a moment to send that message is important, and we appreciate it. Be on the lookout in your email for Advocacy Alerts. Please take a moment to participate in these campaigns. With your support, we can make an impact for our patients and our workforce.



Payment for TIP and TAD will mean EMS is finally fully recognized for our actual role in health care and in our communities.

Make the Most of Your Paramedic Certificate

You may be closer to earning your degree than you think. At Columbia Southern University, you could earn transfer credits toward an Associate of Science in EMS by submitting your paramedic certificate for review. Plus, NAEMT members receive a 15% tuition discount and are eligible to apply for the NAEMT Scholarship.

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LeRon Lewis
B.S. Health Care Administration -
EMS Management

not have had to contend with before. Extreme weather can more rapidly degrade infrastructure, like bridges, roads, and railroad tracks. Global changes in weather patterns can disrupt supply chains.

And the greater frequency of these events can make it more difficult for responders to recover from the last one before the next one hits. "This can lead to readiness degradation," Wescott said.

Westcott spoke with *NAEMT News* about the impact of extreme weather on EMS – and how EMS can prepare for more to come.

Heat – dangerous for patients and crews

Heat is the #1 weather-related killer. 911 calls for heat-related emergencies spike during heat waves – so much so that in 2023, two federal agencies launched the EMS Heat Tracker³.

The online dashboard is a project of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Climate Change and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Tracking heat-related 911 calls enables immediate decisions about where to open cooling centers and provide outreach to at-risk populations.

Need to create an extreme weather plan for your EMS agency?

To help get you started, here's an example of an extreme weather plan from the Hudson Valley Regional EMS Council in New York.

<https://hvremSCO.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Extreme-Weather-Conditions.pdf>



It can also help drive future decisions about heat mitigation strategies, such as planting more trees.

But heat is also an issue for the EMS workforce. Working in extreme heat stresses the heart and other organs. EMS crews face heat stress when they're helping patients in hot indoor environments that lack air-conditioning, and when responding outdoors.

High humidity makes it harder for the body to cool itself through perspiration. "It becomes like operating in a very intense sauna. You've got stagnant air so your sweat doesn't evaporate," she said.

Phoenix Fire Department knows heat

Crews with the Phoenix Fire Department are used to the heat. Yet the summer of 2023 was next level even for them, said Phoenix Fire Department Capt. Rob McDade.

In June, Phoenix temperatures hit 110 degrees and stayed there for 31 days straight. The heat wave led to at least 569 confirmed heat-related deaths. "We ran more heat-related calls than we have in the history of our department," McDade said.

Outdoor workers like landscapers and construction workers, the homeless and

the elderly were among those hardest hit.

To treat patients with heat-related illnesses, fire trucks keep IV fluids cool in ice chests. Anecdotal reports suggest that cold IV fluids may lower core body temperature faster, although it's still being studied and there isn't consensus on this⁴.

The fire department lobbied the city to close certain hiking trails during the hottest hours. Firefighters were being called to do mountain rescues for hikers with heat stroke, putting the rescuers at risk while doing so.

We ran more heat-related calls than we have in the history of our department.

Outdoor training exercises for personnel have also been shifted to cooler, winter months, for crew safety.

And on days when temperatures soar, supervisors check in with crews to make sure they have opportunities to cool off and hydrate, especially after fire-related calls.

"There is no more 'cowboy up,'" McDade said. "It's, 'Let's not get our folks hurt.' Heat is a health risk."

¹NASA, "NASA Announces Summer 2023 Hottest on Record," NASA, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.nasa.gov/news-release/nasa-announces-summer-2023-hottest-on-record/>.

²"Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters: Overview." National Centers for Environmental Information, Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/#:~:text=In%202023%2C%20there%20were%2028,and%201%20winter%20storm%20event.>

³National EMS Information System. "Heat-Related EMS Activation Surveillance Dashboard." nemsis.org. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://nemsis.org/heat-related-ems-activation-surveillance-dashboard/>.

⁴McDermott, Brendon P., and Whitley C. Atkins. "Whole-body cooling effectiveness of cold intravenous saline following exercise hyperthermia: a randomized trial." *The American Journal of Emergency Medicine*, vol. 72, 2023, pp. 188-192. ISSN 0735-6757. doi: 10.1016/j.ajem.2023.07.053.

Hot and bothered

Here's another heat-related threat – research⁵ shows there's a connection between heat and violence. As temperatures rise, people feel uncomfortable. Some may have a harder time managing anger and emotions.

A 2022 analysis published in *JAMA Network*⁶ of 3.5 million emergency department records found emergency department visits for psychiatric conditions spiked on really hot days.

"During those direct heat, high pressure days, you're seeing an uptick in aggression. You're seeing domestic violence go up, and animal attacks go up," Westcott said.

Yes, animals get cranky too. An analysis⁷ of nearly 70,000 dog bites in eight U.S. cities found dog bites went up 4% on high heat days and 11% on days with elevated UV radiation.



Heat brings larger, more intense storms

Rising global temperatures are at the root of the extreme weather, Westcott explained. Because the planet is interconnected, changes in temperatures, wind or currents in one place can affect weather patterns elsewhere, sometimes in ways that are hard to predict.

Scientists have been keeping a close

eye on tropical cyclones. These are large, rotating storms – hurricanes, typhoons and tropical storms.

The good news? The number of hurricanes reaching U.S. shores has not increased in the last century. Models show they might even become less frequent. The bad news? Tropical cyclones are showing a tendency to rapidly strengthen into incredibly powerful storms⁸.

"Those are your Category 4 and 5 hurricanes. These systems are larger now, and capable of damaging more regions simultaneously," Westcott said. Researchers recently proposed adding a new, Category 6⁹ for storms with wind speeds above 192 miles per hour.

Intense storms can overwhelm runoff and drainage systems that weren't built to handle the deluge, leading to flooding even in areas not typically thought of as flood prone.

If the ground is already wet, the capacity to absorb rain is already diminished. Droughts can cause their

own issues. If the ground is really dry when a big rain hits, it acts like pavement. Heavy rains slough off quickly, causing flash floods.

Power outages and infrastructure damage

Infrastructure also takes a beating in extreme weather. Fires, ice storms, floods and heat waves put pressure on an overloaded, aging electrical grid.

Between 2000 and 2021, about 83% of major power outages in the U.S. were caused by weather, according to an analysis¹⁰ by Climate Central. The average annual number surged by roughly 78% between 2011 and 2021 compared to the 10 years prior.

Lengthy power outages can affect EMS and hospital operations, surpass the battery lifespan of home medical equipment, and cause heat illness and hypothermia in those who are most vulnerable or live in poorly insulated homes.

SEE PAGE 8



⁵"How Heatwaves Impact Your Brain." Time, Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://time.com/6280073/how-heatwaves-impact-your-brain/>.

⁶Nori-Sarma, Amruta, Shuo Sun, Yan Sun, et al. "Association Between Ambient Heat and Risk of Emergency Department Visits for Mental Health Among US Adults, 2010 to 2019." *JAMA Psychiatry*, vol. 79, no. 4, 2022, pp. 341-349. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2021.4369.

⁷"Dog Bites Increase as the Temps Rise, Study Finds." Harvard Gazette, 2023. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/07/dog-bites-increase-as-the-temps-rise-study-finds/>.

⁸"A Force of Nature: Hurricanes in a Changing Climate." NASA Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/3184/a-force-of-nature-hurricanes-in-a-changing-climate/>.

⁹Wehner, Michael F., and James P. Kossin. "The growing inadequacy of an open-ended Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale in a warming world." Edited by Kerry Emanuel. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 121, no. 7, Feb. 5, 2024, pp. e2308901121. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2308901121>.

¹⁰"Surging Weather-Related Power Outages." Climate Matters. Climate Central. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/surging-weather-related-power-outages>.

Extreme heat has also buckled airport runways and roads, warped train tracks, and cracked the metal in bridges¹¹. "Our building materials didn't account for the continuous temperatures at the rate we are seeing them now," Wescott said.

Heat can cause power lines to expand, sag, touch dry grass or trees and spark wildfires, while tidal flooding and sea water intrusion damages building foundations in coastal areas.

Pests and pathogens in new places

Mosquito-borne illnesses: Mosquitoes love nothing more than warm, wet weather. Warmer temperatures can accelerate mosquito biting rates, enhance disease incubation within them, and put humans at greater risk of contracting diseases like West Nile virus¹².



The risks of contracting malaria are very, very low. But conditions are becoming more favorable for mosquitoes that can carry it.

Changes to weather patterns can also impact bird migration patterns, which impact mosquito populations. Warmer winters mean fewer deep freezes to kill off mosquito eggs, while heavy rains leave behind standing water and high humidity. "Some of those areas only stay wet for a few weeks and then they dry up, but that's all mosquitoes need," Wescott said.

In 2023, the U.S. saw nine cases of locally acquired malaria for the first time in a century¹³. The risks of contracting malaria are very, very low. But conditions are becoming more favorable for mosquitoes that can carry it.

Alpha-gal syndrome: Once rare, a meat allergy from a tick bite known as



alpha-gal syndrome now affects up to 450,000 people in the U.S., according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention¹⁴.

It's caused by a bite from the lone star tick. The tick is found mostly in the southern and eastern U.S., but its range is expanding. Alpha-gal takes its name from galactose-alpha-1,3-galactose, a sugar present in beef, pork, and lamb. Lone star ticks transmit the sugar to people through a bite. Some people's immune systems then interpret the sugar as a threat and overreact to it the next time they eat meat.

Once rare, a meat allergy from a tick bite known as alpha-gal syndrome now affects up to 450,000 people in the U.S.



Reactions are sending people to emergency rooms with anaphylaxis, often several hours after their meal. Many people go to bed and wake up with horrible stomach pain or even gasping for breath, but they don't necessarily connect it to the dinner they ate hours earlier.

Valley fever: Valley fever is caused by the fungus coccidioides, which lives in the soil in hot, dry areas. Some people who become infected have no symptoms, or recover within a few weeks. But others can become severely ill or permanently

disabled. Cases have soared over the past two decades, according to the CDC¹⁵.

The fungus can survive long periods of drought, and then flourish after abnormally wet winters. When the ground dries out again, the wind sends the spores up into the air, and into people's lungs.

This is what happened recently in California. In 2022, California emerged from a lengthy drought into one of the wettest winters on record. The number of reported Valley fever cases surged 800% from 2000 to 2022, according to the state's department of public health¹⁶.

Wescott herself contracted it, likely during training exercises in Arizona. "I have lung nodules. When they do scans, they always assume it's cancer, but I have these little tumor buddies that live with me now," she said.

By Jenifer Goodwin

Want to learn more?

NAEMT members can listen to the webinar, "Extreme Weather Impacts on EMS Practitioners and Patient Care," led by Sunny Wescott, lead meteorologist at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cyber and Critical Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

¹¹ "Record-Breaking Heat Wave in the Pacific Northwest Is Buckling Roads and Railway Lines." The Washington Post, 20 July 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/20/heat-wave-road-railway-buckling/>.

¹² "Climate Change Indicators: West Nile Virus." Environmental Protection Agency. Accessed 14 Feb. 2024, <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-west-nile-virus>.

¹³ Bagchi, Sanjeet. "Locally Acquired Malaria Cases in the USA." The Lancet, vol. 23, no. 10, October 2023, p. E401. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(23\)00581-9/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(23)00581-9/abstract)

¹⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Epidemiology of Fatal Injuries in the United States, 2015-2019." MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, vol. 72, no. 30, 6 Aug. 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7230a2.htm?s_cid=mm7230a2_w.

¹⁵ Coccidioidomycosis Statistics, "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/coccidioidomycosis/statistics.html>.

¹⁶ California Department of Public Health. "Valley Fever Dashboard." Accessed February 14, 2024, <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/ValleyFeverDashboard.aspx>.

How Can EMS Prepare for Extreme Weather Events?

The specific threats communities face will be local, and the solutions are complex. But there are some key steps EMS agencies can take to prepare.

1 Training and education: EMS medical directors and education program directors should educate personnel on recognizing and protecting their staff from new or emerging health issues or pathogens they may encounter.

2 Assess your climate risks and vulnerabilities: EMS agencies need to assess their facilities, vehicles, and communications to determine if they can withstand extreme weather events.

Prioritize things that can be done in the short term – like making sure you have an updated personnel contact list, and that the utility company has your facilities on priority to power up during power outages. Plan for longer-term items, and invest in weather-resilient upgrades where possible.

3 Have a plan for supply chain disruptions: Steps may include maintaining a backup supply of essential equipment, and identifying, vetting and forging relationships with alternate suppliers or sources.

4 Prepare your staff: EMS practitioners are also members of the community. When floods, wildfires or tornadoes hit, EMS personnel have families, pets and homes to worry about too. Make sure personnel have a family plan, and that your EMS agency has a contingency plan and resources to assist them.



5 Educate the public: EMS agencies can educate the public about the health risks of heatwaves and blizzards, understanding warning systems and evacuation routes, and other emergency preparedness topics.

6 Identify vulnerable populations: Work with local governments and public safety partners to identify vulnerable or special needs populations who will be most at risk during extreme weather events.

7 Collaboration and coordination: Make sure mutual aid plans are updated. Plan ahead for collaboration with other first response agencies, public health, hospitals, utility companies, and community groups to coordinate response efforts and share resources during emergencies. Don't forget the highway department: they're key to keeping major routes to hospitals open after snow storms, tornadoes, and hurricanes. Attend disaster preparedness meetings in your area.

8 Research and innovation: EMS agencies can look for opportunities to assist with developing new approaches to respond to extreme weather events, such as new treatment protocols or medical devices. Phoenix Fire Department, for example, participated in a pilot program using ice-filled, waterproof body bags zipped to shoulder level to cool down patients with heat stroke. The immersive cooling technique is also being studied in some hospitals¹⁷.

Or, consider working with partners to launch a telemedicine program. During major snow or other weather events when even EMS vehicles can't get through, dispatch centers can connect 911 calls to telehealth providers.

By Jenifer Goodwin. Steve Kroll contributed.

¹⁷ "Doctors Prepare for Extreme Heat Amid Climate Change." STAT, July 18, 2023. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://www.statnews.com/2023/07/18/doctors-prepare-for-extreme-heat-climate-change/>.

2024 NAEMT Annual Meeting at EMS World Expo

LAS VEGAS

NAEMT extends a warm invitation to all NAEMT members to join us for the NAEMT Annual Meeting, to be held in conjunction with EMS World Expo, Sept. 9-13.

The gathering is a chance to meet fellow members and NAEMT leadership, network with EMS colleagues from around the world, and create enduring friendships.

General Membership Meeting and Awards Presentation

Tuesday, Sept. 10
5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

NAEMT leaders will recap the year's activities, present future goals and honor recipients of the National EMS Awards of Excellence.

There is no fee to attend the General Membership Meeting, Awards Presentation or Reception.

NAEMT Member Reception

Tuesday, Sept. 10
6:45 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Immediately following the awards presentation, join us for refreshments and a chance to connect with EMS colleagues.

NAEMT Members Save \$125 on the 3-Day EMS World Expo Registration

To redeem, log in to the Member Portal at naemt.org, select "Access Your Benefits" and then "EMS World Expo benefit."

Or go to emsworldexpo.com and click "Register Now." Select "NAEMT Member Passes." To complete your registration and receive the discount, you'll need your NAEMT ID and password.

Forgot your member number? Contact NAEMT at membership@naemt.org or call (601) 924-7744.

Need to renew or upgrade your membership? Go to the Member Portal at naemt.org and click the "Renew or Upgrade" link.

Other Events

All NAEMT members are also invited to attend these meetings:

- ✓ **NAEMT Board of Directors**
Monday, Sept. 9
8 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- ✓ **Regional European Education Committee**
Wednesday, Sept. 11
8 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.
- ✓ **Latin American Education Committee**
Wednesday, Sept. 11
11 a.m. to 12:15 a.m.
- ✓ **Mideast Education Committee**
Wednesday, Sept. 11
12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.
- ✓ **Asia Regional Education Committee**
Wednesday, Sept. 11
12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Other Annual Meeting events are by invitation only. They include the National EMS Leaders Meeting and Luncheon hosted by the Affiliate Advisory Council, the International Reception, the Lighthouse Leadership Class of 2024 Graduation, and the NAEMT Faculty Meeting and Reception.



For a full schedule of events, visit naemt.org > Events > Annual Meeting.

RECOGNIZE YOUR OUTSTANDING COLLEAGUES

Nominate for the 2024 National EMS Awards of Excellence

Do you know someone who has demonstrated outstanding commitment, innovation, or leadership in their work? We encourage you to nominate them for the 2024 National EMS Awards of Excellence.

The awards celebrate the individuals and agencies that have made remarkable contributions to our profession, or who have gone above and beyond in serving our patients and communities.

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2024 awards. Your participation will help us honor them and their accomplishments, and thank them for their remarkable service.

2024 Award Categories

- NAEMT EMT of the Year Award
Sponsored by Demers-Braun-Crestline-Medix
- NAEMT Paramedic of the Year Award
Sponsored by Velico
- Community Paramedic of the Year Award
- NAEMT EMS Educator of the Year Award
Sponsored by Jones & Bartlett Learning Public Safety Group
- NAEMT EMS Medical Director of the Year Award
Sponsored by Bound Tree-Sarnova
- NAEMT Military Medic of the Year Award
Sponsored by North American Rescue
- NAEMT-American Academy of Pediatrics Pediatric EMS Award
Sponsored by Handtevy Pediatric Emergency Standards, Inc.
- Dick Ferneau Career EMS Service of the Year
Sponsored by Ferno
- Volunteer EMS Service of the Year Award
Sponsored by Digitech
- NAEMT-ACEP EMS Safety in EMS Award
Sponsored Technimount
- EMS Caring Award
Sponsored by Dynarex
- Wellness and Resilience Award
Sponsored by FirstNet, Built with AT&T



Nominations accepted through May 20

Winners receive \$1,000, plus three core program registrations and a \$1,200 stipend for travel and lodging at EMS World Expo, to be held Sept. 9-13 in Las Vegas.

Awards will be presented at the NAEMT General Membership Meeting or the EMS World Expo opening session. Recipients will be recognized in NAEMT and EMS World media.



Submit a nomination at naemt.org > Initiatives > National EMS Awards.

EMS Staffing Standards Project Moves Forward

As the population grows, EMS call volumes generally rise. A new study is taking a more granular look at trends in call volume and urgency to better predict EMS staffing needs nationwide.

Using data on over 1 million calls to 38 public safety answering points (PSAPs) between 2018 and 2023, researchers will analyze which types of chief complaints are rising, which are falling, and trends in patient acuity. The analysis will be used to help EMS agencies and communities determine if their ambulance staffing levels meet both current and predicted needs for delivering quality patient care, efficient operations, and practitioner safety.

"With the current EMS staffing challenges, it's important to understand changes in response patterns over time to help EMS and community leaders more appropriately staff for future EMS responses," says Matt Zavadsky, chair of NAEMT's Economics Committee.

The study is being conducted as part of a joint initiative led by NAEMT to develop recommendations for staffing

EMS personnel for 911 medical calls and scheduled interfacility transports. Participating organizations include the American Ambulance Association (AAA), International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP), National Registry of EMTs (NREMT), National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) and International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED). The work group plans to develop a "Guidance Document on Minimum Staffing Standards."

In 2023, the work group received approval from the IAED Institutional Review Board to study six years of EMS response volume from 38 PSAPs. These call centers have received IAED Accredited Center of Excellence designation for adhering to best practices in emergency medical dispatch.

"We're getting really good, clean data from 1 million calls to understand what kinds of calls are increasing, and which are decreasing," Zavadsky says.



"We want to know, as a percentage of calls, are psychiatric calls, overdoses, or car accidents rising or falling? This can help inform how we need to staff our emergency vehicles."

The study will also analyze how different groups and demographics within communities are using EMS. By understanding these trends, communities can better predict their own EMS staffing needs. The study results will be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

For example, if the study shows older individuals call EMS more per capita, and a community knows its population is aging, then it can better predict what level of EMS services will be needed. Conversely, if a community is getting a large influx of young families, call volume and patient acuity may not go up as much. "That is the information we want to give to EMS agency directors, medical directors, and elected and appointed officials," Zavadsky says.

Letters and Comments

Letters to Congress: Fund SIREN Grants to \$31 Million

NAEMT has asked Senate and House leaders to fund the Rural EMS Training, Equipment and Assistance Grant (REMSTEA) program to \$31 million in fiscal year 2024.

Also known as the SIREN grants, the program was funded to \$10.5 million in fiscal year 2023. The grants can be used for recruitment or retention of EMS personnel, training and education, or purchasing equipment and supplies.

NAEMT Comment on GEMT Payment Program

NAEMT provided comment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on reimbursements related to Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) supplemental payment programs. Currently, CMS is withholding approval of some state plan amendments (SPAs), citing potentially unallowable costs. NAEMT's memo detailed what should be considered allowable costs and therefore eligible for reimbursement.

Reauthorize the EMS for Children Program

NAEMT strongly supports the Emergency Medical Services for Children

Program Reauthorization Act of 2024. The EMSC program is the only federal program dedicated to improving emergency care for children and has brought vital attention and resources to pediatric patients.

"Children have unique physiological, emotional, and developmental characteristics that require specialized emergency care," states NAEMT's letter to the Senate sponsors of the bill, S. 3765. "Research shows that taking steps to prepare for children's unique health needs in emergency departments is associated with 60-70% fewer deaths."

Read more at naemt.org > Advocacy > Letters and Comments.

Celebrating 50 Years of National EMS Week

Fifty years ago, President Richard Nixon resigned after the Watergate scandal. Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth's home run record. Meanwhile, the TV sitcom "Happy Days" debuted and *People* magazine published its first issue.



That same year, President Gerald Ford established National EMS Week to recognize the dedication of paramedics and EMTs who provide lifesaving services in communities throughout the nation.

National EMS Week 2024 will be held May 19-25. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the national observance, a time when EMS agencies, hospitals, policymakers, communities and others



are invited to show their gratitude for EMS practitioners. EMS Week is also a time for raising awareness about the vital role EMS plays in protecting the health and safety of the public.

This year's theme is "Honoring Our Past, Forging Our Future." NAEMT partners with the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) on an EMS Week campaign to encourage celebrations nationwide and raise awareness about EMS as an essential service.

"EMS Week celebrates the paramedics, EMTs and other EMS professionals who work diligently to care for their patients and serve their communities in times of crisis," says NAEMT President Susan Bailey. "Honoring Our Past, Forging Our

Future' reminds us of the proud history of our profession and contributions of EMS practitioners over the decades. We also must stay focused on the road ahead: evolving, innovating and ensuring that EMS has the support needed to continue to answer the public's call for help when it's most needed."

EMS Week celebrates the paramedics, EMTs and other EMS professionals who work diligently to care for their patients and serve their communities in times of crisis.

NAEMT EMS Week Raffle!

To celebrate EMS Week, NAEMT will raffle off a variety of must-have products. Items will include Amazon gift cards, an AirPods Pro, and NAEMT merchandise.

Best of all, you don't have to do anything to enter – except be a full member! We randomly select membership numbers and notify winners via email.

EMS Week 2024 features seven theme days. You may want to plan activities around each theme.

SUN	Health, Wellness and Resilience Day
MON	EMS Education Day
TUES	EMS Safety Day
WED	EMS for Children Day
THURS	Save-A-Life Day (CPR & Stop the Bleed Day)
FRI	EMS Recognition Day
SAT	EMS Remembrance Day

Looking for ideas on how to celebrate? Visit naemt.org/initiatives/ems-week.

Find EMS Week logos, social media graphics, an EMS Week proclamation and other helpful materials for download at emsweek.org.

1966

The National Academy of Sciences landmark report, "Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society" sounds the alarm about deaths from motor vehicle accidents on the nation's highways, and the lack of an organized medical response system.

1967

Freedom House Ambulance Service is founded to serve Pittsburgh's African American community. Freedom House helps lay the foundation for paramedic services nationwide.

1972



The TV Show "Emergency!" premieres, inspiring a generation of paramedics.

1973

The EMS Systems Act provides federal funding to establish regional EMS systems throughout the country. Many EMS personnel are experienced medics returning from Vietnam.

1975



The National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians is founded.

1979

The first 911 call was made in the late 1960s. By 1979, one-quarter of the U.S. population has access to it. Access grows rapidly in the 1980s.

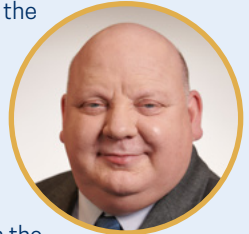
1983

Dr. Norman McSwain, a trauma surgeon and EMS champion from Tulane University School of Medicine, develops Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS).



1980s

We didn't have a lot of the science behind why we were doing what we were doing. We were delivering good care, but it wasn't necessarily evidence-based. It was based on the physician's opinion of what we should be doing. I think we are better now. Accreditation for education programs has been a big win for our profession.



What has remained the same is the people. People still get into EMS for the right reasons. They want to help people. I absolutely would not trade one single day of this for any other job. I have been blessed with having the best teachers in the world, who help me understand what I don't know. I continue to learn every single day.

DAVID FILIPP

Paramedic Program Director
UCLA Center for Prehospital Care

1988

Dr. Jeff Clawson develops the Medical Priority Dispatch System to triage 911 call urgency and establishes the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch.

1984

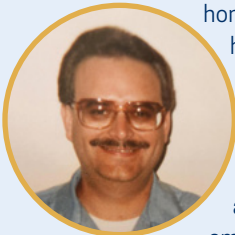


Congress establishes the EMS for Children program to focus on care for pediatric patients.

Big Moments in EMS History

1970s

In 1973, when I was in high school, I got a part-time job at a funeral home. The funeral home also ran the ambulance service. Their philosophy was they'd get your business one way or another. To make the ambulance run, I'd bolt the big red bubble light to the top of the hearse. You had an oxygen tank, a cot and some first-aid supplies, and you were really something.



In 1978, I did a paramedic program in Indianapolis and in 1979 took the National Registry exam. I fell in love with EMS and have been with it for 50 years. Even though it's been a long hard road, we have made so many advances. We are a mobile intensive care unit, and an extension of the emergency room and the medical team. We are bringing the emergency room to you.

JOHN ZARTMAN

EMS Director
Tippecanoe Emergency Ambulance Service
Lafayette, IN

2010s

My parents were refugees from Vietnam. Knowing I had to navigate my parent's trauma from war at a very young age, I felt very equipped to know how to deal with other people's trauma and provide compassion and empathy. That is really what drives me.

A lot of the innovations we do in EMS came from the Vietnam War, and that touches me personally. The 50th anniversary of EMS Week for me is almost in correlation to the 50th anniversary of my parents coming over here looking for a new life. To see the legacy that we are

creating, and how far we have come as medical professionals. We are being recognized as more than ambulance drivers and that is such a great thing to be able to celebrate.



PIERRE LONG HUY NGUYEN
EMT and Firefighter
Travis County EMS District 8, TX
Austin City Council candidate

1992

The first National EMS Memorial Service is held in Virginia.

1997

36 states permitted EMTs to use AEDs in 1994. By 1997, nearly all states did.

Late 1990s

Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) in the field becomes standard of care, reducing the need for intubations.

2020



EMS practitioners are celebrated as heroes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2015

NAEMT launches Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) to prepare EMS to respond to the growing number of active shooters.



2010

EMS established as a medical subspecialty for emergency physicians.

2009

Community paramedic programs launch in Eagle County, CO, Fort Worth, TX, and Wake County, NC.

2004

Pit crew CPR pioneered at University of Arizona.

2001



9/11 terrorist attacks kill 343 FDNY firefighters and eight EMTs and paramedics.

2021

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issues a temporary waiver allowing Medicare payments for treatment in place (TIP) or transport to alternate destinations (TAD).

2020s

I recently started working as a community paramedic. It's a different approach, where you get to spend more time with people. We encounter a lot of individuals who are not able to have those basic needs met as far as health care, so we find those resources for them.



With the older population, sometimes they just feel lonely. I take time to speak to them, and see how they are feeling, or how their emotional health is, as well as their treatment. It gives them someone who will listen, who cares about what they are going through so they don't feel as overwhelmed.

I absolutely love the job, every aspect of it. It gives you experiences like no other job – the relationships you have with coworkers and the impact you get to have on your community. Right now we have the community paramedicine. In the future, who knows what it might branch out into."

GUADALUPE CRUZ
Community Paramedic
Brownsville Fire Department, TX

Become Your Agency's EMS Safety Officer (ESO)

Take NAEMT's New ESO Course

Safety – for patients and practitioners – is a top concern at today's EMS agencies.

Long hours spent driving or responding to emergencies on roadways, lifting and twisting motions, dealing with infectious diseases, and interacting with the public in volatile circumstances mean that risk is inherent to the job.

So how to keep the EMS workforce and patients safe? One way is for every EMS agency to have a safety program overseen by an EMS safety officer (ESO). EMS safety officers take a leadership role in keeping EMS personnel and patients safe, by developing and overseeing their agency's safety program.



EMS safety officers take a leadership role in keeping EMS personnel and patients safe, by developing and overseeing their agency's safety program.

To prepare EMS personnel to take on this role, NAEMT is offering a new course: EMS Safety Officer (ESO). The course draws from research on all aspects of safety, including injury prevention, fatigue, scene safety, and vehicle safety, to offer real-world strategies that ESOs can take back to their agencies.

"An EMS safety officer puts safety at the heart of EMS activities for their patients and their colleagues," said Dr. Douglas Kupas, medical director for NAEMT and the ESO course.

The ESO course teaches EMS practitioners to assess safety in facilities, vehicles, and on-scene. The course also covers best practices for infection prevention and maximizing safety throughout EMS operations. "With those skills, EMS safety officers help ensure their colleagues go home healthy and safe to their families," he said.

Urgent need

The statistics are clear – EMS personnel experience high rates of on-the-job hazards. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), in 2020, 16,900 EMS personnel were seen in emergency departments for injuries and illnesses.

NIOSH research shows the most common causes of injuries includes sprains and strains from lifting patients and equipment; exposure to harmful substances such as blood or respiratory secretions; slips, trips and falls; motor vehicle collisions; and violence or assaults.

An EMS safety officer puts safety at the heart of EMS activities for their patients and their colleagues.

By appointing an EMS safety officer, EMS agencies demonstrate their commitment to the safety of their personnel and patients.

EMS agencies owe it to their personnel to do everything in their power to protect their health and well-being, including building a culture of safety within the agency, Kupas says. Establishing a safety program and having an EMS safety officer to lead it is a necessary step.

"By appointing an EMS safety officer, EMS agencies demonstrate their commitment to the safety of their personnel and patients," Kupas said. "And by taking on the role of ESO, EMS practitioners have another way to make a positive impact on their agency, and show their leadership abilities."

Emergency Safety Officer (ESO) Course

ESO is a 5-hour course offered in an online, interactive format with case studies that highlight current EMS safety concerns. The course is based on the latest evidence-based safety research and covers:

- The role and responsibilities of an EMS safety officer
- Facility safety and security
- Vehicle operator safety
- Scene safety and crew resource management
- Infection prevention and control
- Patient safety
- Personal safety
- Safety training

The course is designed for EMS practitioners with the following qualifications:

- At a minimum, current state certification or license as an EMT
- At least 3 years of full-time practice (or equivalent) at the EMT level or above
- Strong interpersonal communication skills with an interest in serving in this position
- Familiarity with the agency's current safety policies and procedures

The course is available at: psglearning.com.

What are the components of an EMS safety program?

An effective EMS safety program protects agency personnel, patients, and the agency. The program includes resources for the following plans and protocols:

- Mitigate fatigue
- Reduce the risk of collisions
- Promote scene safety
- Ensure infection control for patients and practitioners
- Prevent violence against practitioners
- Maintain practitioner clinical skills
- Minimize patient errors
- Practitioner injury and illness prevention
- Facility safety and security
- Just culture
- Substance abuse prevention

Why should your agency establish and maintain a safety program?

An effective safety program protects your personnel, patients, and agency. A safety program:

- Protects EMS practitioners
- Protects patients
- Protects the public at large
- Lowers operational costs (fewer collisions, time off due to injury, sick days)
- Lowers worker's compensation costs
- Lowers insurance costs
- Results in fewer liability claims
- Improves employee satisfaction and reduces burnout



What is an EMS Safety Officer?

ESO responsibilities are both operational and administrative, and may include:

- ✓ Overseeing safety and risk management initiatives.
- ✓ Identifying, investigating, analyzing, and evaluating potential operational and clinical risks.
- ✓ Developing policies and procedures to reduce risk.
- ✓ Conducting training and continuing education on procedures, protocols, and safety best practices.
- ✓ Working with the medical director and operational leadership to develop, implement, and measure safety-related quality improvement initiatives.
- ✓ Keeping up to date on the latest protocols/standards from voluntary and standards-setting organizations, accrediting organizations, and infection control and prevention organizations.
- ✓ Monitoring workplace injuries and worker's comp/liability claims and identifying ways to prevent those situations in the future.
- ✓ Working with human resources to review driving records and conduct criminal history checks for new employees.
- ✓ Collaborating on new equipment purchases, vehicle operator system reports, and fleet maintenance to verify safe driving practices and mechanically sound vehicles.
- ✓ Implementing infection control policies, exposure response plans, and conducting education and training on exposure prevention and what to do in case of suspected exposure.
- ✓ Promoting personal wellness initiatives among employees.
- ✓ Providing feedback to employees based on analysis of safety data.

New Episodes

NAEMT Radio

NAEMT's podcast series – NAEMT Radio – continues with new episodes every other week. Host Rob Lawrence welcomes EMS thought leaders and innovators for captivating conversations on topics in EMS medicine, operations, disaster planning and more.

Tune in to these episodes and more at naemtradio.podbean.com.

- ✓ **Recruiting the Next Generation Through High School EMS Programs** – Chief Julius Jackson, EMS program director from Eastern High School in Washington D.C., and John Cavell, education manager from the Louisiana Department of Health Bureau of EMS, discuss recruiting the next generation of EMS through high school career and technical education programs.
- ✓ **Treatment in Place and Transport to Alternate Destinations (TIP and TAD)** – Hear the latest on TIP and TAD legislation with Matt Zavadsky, chief transformation officer for MedStar Mobile Healthcare in Fort Worth, Steven Kroll, executive director and volunteer chief of Delmar-Bethlehem EMS in Albany County, New York, and Regina Crawford, advocacy liaison for EMS Management & Consultants and member of the Senate Advisory Committee on Ground Ambulance and Patient Billing.
- ✓ **GEMT Program Update** – NAEMT Immediate Past President Bruce Evans and Matt Zavadsky discuss urgent issues surrounding the Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) payment program. NAEMT has recently written to CMS to address their actions in withholding approval of recently submitted State Plan Amendments (SPAs), citing the potential inclusion of federally unallowable costs that are non-ambulance service delivery-related. GEMT provides reimbursements from Medicaid for EMS agencies that serve a disproportionate number of low-income patients.



- ✓ **What's Ahead in 2024?** NAEMT President Susan Bailey assesses NAEMT's impact in 2023, and lets listeners in on the year ahead for NAEMT, including key reports, committee work, and membership benefits you should know about. Bailey reinforces her key points that EMS practitioners must be paid for the work they are doing, and that reimbursement reform is crucial to getting EMS practitioners the pay they deserve.
- ✓ **Strategies to Implement a Culture of Workplace Engagement in EMS** – Matt Philbrick, manager of GMR Life for Global Medical Response, Shannon Watson, regional practice administrator for BJC Corporate Health, and Nicholas Mutter, a paramedic with Boston EMS, discuss how to build a culture of workforce engagement in EMS. Themes include authenticity, respect, meaning, connection, and work-life balance.
- ✓ **Why Should I Participate in a Regional Health Care Coalition?** Chris Way, chief of Kootenai County Fire & Rescue in Idaho, and Brian Stennett, infection control expert and paramedic with Palatine Fire Department in Illinois, explain what regional health care coalitions are, how they work, and how EMS can benefit from participating.



NEW! Federal Funding Resources Page on NAEMT Website

EMS is eligible for a variety of federal grants. To help our members identify and apply for these grant opportunities, NAEMT has created a new federal funding resources page on our website.

Visit the funding resources page to find information on:

- ✓ How to register for federal grants.
- ✓ Tips for submitting a successful application and managing grants.
- ✓ A list of funding opportunities, eligibility and deadlines.

Visit naemt.org > Resources > Federal Funding.

NAEMT Webinars:

Free CE for NAEMT Members

Take advantage of one of NAEMT's most valuable member benefits – earn free CE while gaining valuable insights on essential topics in EMS clinical care and operations.

NAEMT webinars bring you the latest information on topics ranging from managing difficult airways to preparing for disaster response, presented by leading experts.

To earn free CE, NAEMT members must attend the *live* webinars. Look for upcoming dates in your email and NAEMT Pulse!

Recorded webinars are available for on-demand viewing at any time in the NAEMT Member Portal at naemt.org.

RECORDED Geriatric Trauma – Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms

Approximately 40% of EMS calls are for geriatric patients. Although many of these calls may seem routine, a fall, sudden onset confusion, or shortness of breath is anything but routine for these patients and can indicate trauma. With geriatric patients, there is often more than meets the eye and even “normal” vital signs can be misleading. Dr. Chris Colwell and Dr. Doug Kupas discussed the NAEMSP Geriatric Trauma Compendium, best practices for triage of geriatric patients, and how to better manage (and prevent) geriatric falls.

RECORDED Thoracic Trauma – Recognizing and Treating Tension Pneumothorax

Managing patients with life-threatening tension pneumothorax is a critical EMS intervention. Presentation of signs and symptoms can range from subtle (chest discomfort and difficulty breathing) to severe (apnea and cyanosis). Without classic findings, tension pneumothorax may be challenging to correctly identify, placing patients at risk for development of hypotension and uncompensated shock. Join Drs. Kenji Inaba and Phil Moy for a case-based discussion on recognition of tension pneumothorax, anatomic landmarks for decompression, and options for pleural decompression.

RECORDED Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement – How to Find and Keep EMS Clinicians

EMS agencies are facing critical shortages of personnel. The solutions for recruiting and retaining more of the right people seem unreachable when reimbursement or tax support for EMS agencies is decreasing, expenses are increasing, and many organizations are asking more and more from their personnel.

As the struggle for talent heats up, what role does work culture and employee engagement play? Can building an amazing culture, that people want to engage in, provide a possible solution to attracting and retaining personnel? Join Aaron Reinert from



SafeTech Solutions to learn more about the ways you can influence EMS organizational culture to improve recruitment and retention.

RECORDED Equal and Equitable EMS System Considerations

Equal and equitable deployment operations for EMS agencies come down to two foundational elements: where you are located (coverage) and how you get resources to the patient (response). This webinar presented by the Public Consulting Group breaks down the “where” and “how” to help you determine if your EMS agency or system is more equal or equitable in its current design and poses questions to get you thinking about whether your approach really is best for your community. The webinar covers patient access to care and community-focused EMS system of care designs, the individual components of equal coverage/response versus equitable coverage/response, and elements of crew resource management with respect to EMS agency/system coverage and response operations.

NEW! Four-Part Leadership Webinar Series

NAEMT and SafeTech Solutions have launched a four-part webinar series on EMS leadership.

Part 1 Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement – How to Find and Keep EMS Clinicians, is available for viewing in the NAEMT Member Portal.

Look for registration info for upcoming webinars in NAEMT Pulse and in your email.

Part 2 Professionalism – A Study of Workforce Behaviors
May 21, 11 a.m. CT

Part 3 Influence – How to Help Others See What You See
August 27, 11 a.m. CT

Part 4 Crucial Conversations – Mastering the Art of Difficult Conversations
November 19, 11 a.m. CT

A photograph of paramedics at night, illuminated by the red and white lights of an ambulance. One paramedic in the foreground has "PARAMEDIC" written on their back. Another paramedic further back also has "PARAMEDIC" on their back. The scene is dark, with the primary light source being the emergency vehicle's lights.

LEARN FROM TRAUMA CARE TRAILBLAZERS

Join Us for the 2024 World Trauma Symposium

Immerse yourself in an inspiring gathering of global experts on the forefront of prehospital trauma care. Register for the 2024 World Trauma Symposium.

- Explore innovative approaches to trauma care: traumatic brain injuries, maternal trauma, prehospital ultrasound – and more!
- Discuss mass casualty incident management using real-world scenarios.
- Gain valuable insights from U.S. and international trauma experts in the civilian, military and tactical sectors.
- Connect with fellow EMS professionals who share your passion for improving patient outcomes and saving lives!

Whether you're a seasoned professional or new to the field, the World Trauma Symposium offers something for everyone.



Tuesday, September 10, 2024
Las Vegas (at EMS World Expo)

The event will be offered in-person and livestreamed. Up to 8 hours of CAPCE-approved CE, CME or nursing CE available.

Trauma Innovations – Transforming Prehospital Care

Register at emsworldexpo.com/world-trauma-symposium

Paramedic Annette Redelman Awarded NAEMT-CSU Scholarship



Annette Redelman of Westport, Indiana, has been awarded the 2024 NAEMT-Columbia Southern University Scholarship. Redelman works as a paramedic and teaches EMT courses. She's pursuing a bachelor's degree in emergency medical services administration at CSU.

"I only have eight courses left to finish my bachelor's degree," Redelman said. "I want to show others what a rewarding career EMS can be."

To learn more about this and other NAEMT scholarships, log in to the Member Portal at naemt.org and click "Scholarships."

COME SEE US

We love meeting our members in person. Please stop by the NAEMT booth to hear the latest association news, see our new publications, and receive a warm greeting from our team.

APRIL 18-20	FDIC International Booth #9138 Indianapolis, IN
MAY 14-16	Special Operations Medical Association (SOMA) Scientific Assembly Booth #331 Raleigh, NC
MAY 29-JUNE 2	Accreditcon Booth #16 Oklahoma City, OK
AUG 3-7	Arkansas EMT Association Hot Springs, AR
AUG 5-7	National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) Legislative Summit Louisville, KY
AUG 12-17	National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) EMS Educator Symposium Pittsburgh, PA
SEPT 9-13	EMS World Expo Las Vegas, NV



Alaska Medical Transport of Anchorage, AK, under the northern lights.

Welcome New Agency Members

NAEMT warmly welcomes our newest agency members:

- America First Response, Billings, MT
- Alaska Medical Transport, Anchorage, AK
- Coastal Health Systems of Brevard, Rockledge, FL
- Oologah-Talala EMS, Oologah, OK
- Mason County EMS, Point Pleasant, WV
- Guilford Emergency Squad, Guilford, NY
- City of Thornton Fire Department, Thornton, CO



"Most departments struggle with getting their EMS clinicians time off the street to come in and do traditional education. We need an efficient way to deliver content.



Recert is an example of an outstanding platform that delivers evidence-based prehospital medical content that can be consumed by emergency responders any time of day."

David Vitberg, MD

Assistant Medical Director, Washington, D.C.
Fire & EMS / Recert Medical Director

Find evidence-based online recertification courses now at psglearning.com/recert

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT Keito Ortiz

Paramedic, EMS Educator

For over 30 years, Keito Ortiz worked as paramedic and EMS educator in and around New York City. He's seen his share of horrors.

But nothing prepared him for the day in September 2023 that he got a call from his wife: their daughter's bus had veered off an interstate and toppled into a ravine in upstate New York. The bus was filled with students headed for band camp in Pennsylvania.

"It was the beginning of my nightmarish feeling," Ortiz recalls. "As a paramedic, we understand trauma outcomes and probabilities."

His daughter was found with deep bruises, cuts and ligament injuries. EMTs marked her with a yellow tag. Others fared worse. Several students were critically injured, and two teachers died.

After months of rehab, his daughter's physical injuries are healing. But her mental anguish remains, Ortiz says.

The trauma has impacted the entire family. Seeing his daughter in pain, feeling powerless to fix it, and reliving the awful moment that he feared he lost her, have left Ortiz feeling depressed and anxious too.

"It hits differently when it's your child," Ortiz says. The family has sought counseling to help them through it.

There may have been a time when Ortiz wouldn't have been so open about his mental health struggles. Today, he feels it doesn't get talked about enough.



"Nobody wants to talk because they are afraid of being judged. I'm not. I

say, 'Let's talk about it,'" Ortiz says. "I was at the breaking point mentally. Yet I found it to be so challenging to find help. I had to fight to find resources. It should not be that hard to find help."

Ortiz has worked as a paramedic in the South Bronx, and as prehospital care training coordinator at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in Queens, New York. Today, he's continuing education specialist for AMR in Bay Shore, New York, where he provides continuing education for over 300 EMTs and paramedics.

He's also studying to become a critical care paramedic, and working on his bachelor's degree from Columbia Southern University. On weekends, he works paramedic shifts for two local fire services. "That's my fun," he says. "I enjoy the patient care and the interaction with people."

Ortiz spoke with *NAEMT News* about the importance of EMS practitioners seeking help for mental health issues, why he loves teaching, and how he tries to inspire the next generation of EMS practitioners.



What do you like about teaching?

Being a paramedic, you are a singular person doing one good deed as a time. Being an educator, you are a multiplier. If I can make a difference for my students, they will go out and do 10,000 jobs, and they will do better work. You can make a difference on a grander scale. I put my heart and soul into teaching the next generation because they can affect thousands of other people.

Do you feel today's younger generation of students learns differently?

When I was a student, there was less interaction between teachers and students. It felt like a sink-or-swim situation. Today's students crave feedback and validation.

They are more comfortable with adults and authority figures. Students also have constant access to media. Classroom time seems unnecessary to some. They can just Google the answers. So the educator needs to create a warm, welcoming and friendly environment.

I avoid "death by PowerPoint." I don't use it unless I absolutely have to. Their

phone is also a key component of the class now. I expect them to have their phone in their hand anyway, so I'll have a QR code that they can scan. The code goes to a video or something I want them to read. We reinforce most things with simulations, using high-fidelity manikins.

I also engage them. I have ADD and dyslexia. I tell them, "If I can do it. You can do it." I take medication if I have to take a high stakes exam. Knowing these things about me helps them open up. They recognize I care about them.

Why did you decide to pursue a bachelor's degree?

I'm working on my degree from Columbia Southern University in industrial hygiene – thank you NAEMT for the discount. I'm interested in a position in risk management. Will I ever give up being a paramedic? Probably not.

Were you nervous to go back to school?

I was super apprehensive. But I went all in. And currently my GPA is a 4.0. What I have learned is you have to have that personal drive to get it done.

Who is someone who has influenced your career?

Dr. Chris Nollette of the National Association of EMS Educators. I took the IC1 and IC2 classes from him, and David Page. These guys have encouraged me and given me guidance. They have made me push the educational envelope past the mainstream.

Any plans for EMS Week?

Last year, AMR's Safety Slogan was "Respect the Red." I took it and went above and beyond. I got red hats, red shirts, red lollipops, red candy. It sounds hokey but it worked.

I also created a safety slogan: "Stop Signs are Not Stoptional." I made a T-shirt and wore it proudly. I'd ask the crews, "What does this mean to you?" And I'd hand out lollipops. Our system monitors driving behavior 24-7. Risky behaviors, like running stop signs, plummeted during the campaign.

You're NAEMT Membership Coordinator for New York and also a member of the NAEMT Membership Committee. Why did you want to get more involved with NAEMT?

I was a member for many years. I approached NAEMT staff at EMS World Expo and said, "What more can I do? How can I become more involved?" There are a lot of things that need to be done in my state. I wanted to influence people to make positive moves for the EMS community. I have a lot of ideas, and by being involved with NAEMT I could help make those happen.



In New York, I am constantly telling people why they should join, and how NAEMT benefits us as individuals and the EMS community. If they give me 5 minutes of their time, they usually join, and it gets them more involved with the EMS community as a whole.

You were the prehospital care training coordinator at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in Queens when COVID-19 pandemic started. That area was hit early and hard by the virus. How did you deal with it?

All education was put on pause. So I fit-tested 6,800 people with N-95s. First I fit-tested all prehospital personnel, and then they tasked me with fit-testing the rest of the hospital staff. It was a 7-day-a-week, 15-hour-a-day job. Nobody was prepared for this. Whenever I had free

time, I was on the ambulance to backfill for the crew. Everybody was getting sick. It was rough.

What did you learn from the experience?

I learned we are undersupplied and undereducated on PPE donning and doffing and fit-testing. And people were not sure when and how to say, "I need help."

"I need help" in terms of PPE, or in terms of being physically and mentally exhausted?

Both. Our crews were pushing themselves to physical exhaustion. They were in robot mode. People physically got sick. A good colleague of mine died of COVID. Anthony "Tony" Thomas was a longstanding EMS educator in New York City. He taught thousands of paramedics. We all felt his loss.

EMS providers are the kind of people who want to do do do. They don't know how to say, "I can't do this anymore." They want to be the good soldier, the good trooper. They don't know their boundaries.

How have you personally evolved as a paramedic?

What I have learned is compassion. It's not just a bus crash. This is somebody's child. Being in education, I teach that this is not just somebody you are taking care of. This is somebody's loved one.

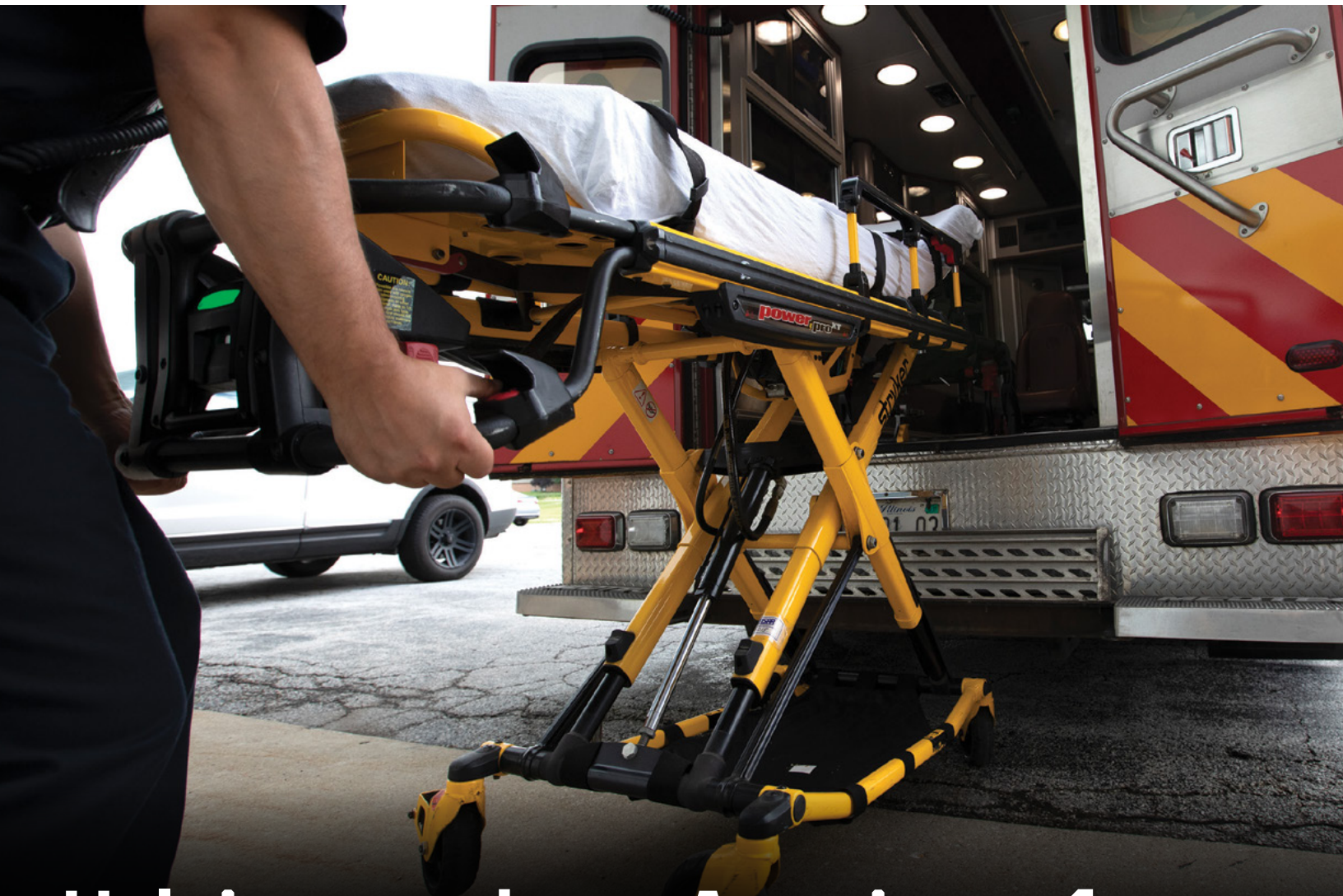
Mental health is like an onion. There are layers and layers. What I have learned going through my own anxiety and depression is that when people say "Get over it," that is nonsense. It takes time.

EMS education doesn't really explain that mental health patients are not just a quick fix. As a paramedic, if it's broken, I want to fix it. If it's bleeding, I want to stop it. With mental health, it takes a long time to understand yourself and deal with it.

Now I have such compassion for people in my heart for people with mental health issues. My approach is, "It's going to be a long road, but let's get you some help." It's completely shifted my own thoughts as an EMS professional.



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