

Texas EMS Trauma News

Summer 2017 Vol. 4 No. 3

Lights and Siren Use by Emergency Medical Services: Above All Do No Harm

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Primum non nocere – “first do no harm”. This principle of medicine guides us to be sure that our treatments are not causing harm to our patients. EMS vehicle crashes are harmful to both our patients and our family of EMS providers. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration recently supported the development of a monograph to review the evidence in the literature related to lights and siren (L&S) use and to discuss considerations related to L&S use by EMS vehicle operators.

This review discusses the evidence behind the crash risk when using L&S, differences in state laws regarding L&S use, the effectiveness of L&S, the time saved when using L&S, the effect of siren use on EMS provider hearing, the physiologic changes in patients during L&S use, the public perception and expectations, and the clinical conditions where L&S may be of benefit.

Over 200 scientific articles, position statements, and reviews related to L&S use were used to develop the L&S recommendations and discussion within this document, and each is summarized in the annotated bibliography that accompanies this monograph. Some view discussions about the safe use of L&S as a relatively new concept in EMS, but one of the most interesting finds in the literature was a 1953 research article by Parks that questioned the transport of patients with L&S. This study of 808 patients found that conservatively only 4.2% of the patients were true emergencies that would benefit by L&S transport.

The monograph makes the argument that L&S response or transport is a medical intervention that has a goal of improving a patient's outcome. From that perspective, the use of L&S should be limited to patients and medical conditions that are expected to benefit from this intervention – with consideration of the risks and harms that the intervention may cause. Although each agency must assess the risks and benefits of L&S use in their communities, the evidence in the literature and the opinion of experts in the field suggest that all EMS agencies should aim to reduce their use of L&S to the lowest rates that provide optimal patient outcomes – benchmarks that are appropriate for the vast majority of EMS agencies include using L&S during response on less than 50% of 911 calls and using L&S during patient transport on less than 5% of 911 calls. Many EMS agencies that provide outstanding care already use L&S far less than these suggested benchmarks, but other agencies will find cultural challenges to moving in this direction.

EMS vehicle operators may be interested to learn that they may be overestimating the effectiveness of L&S in drawing attention to an EMS vehicle. The differences between the use and effectiveness of emergency warning lights when “requesting the right of way” when the vehicle is in motion and “blocking the right of way” when the vehicle is used to increase a safety perimeter at a scene are also discussed.

The entire monograph can be downloaded online at EMS.gov.

Jon Huss Named Associate Commissioner

Jonathan (Jon) R. Huss has been named associate commissioner for DSHS Regulatory Services effective June 1. Jon has served as interim associate commissioner for the division since November of last year. He has been with the Division of Regulatory Services for eight years and has served as the Director of the Environmental and Consumer Safety Section.

Mr. Huss received his BA from Messiah College in Grantham, PA, and holds professional certifications in management, industrial operations and disaster response and recovery. He has served as deputy regional director in two of DSHS's eight regions and prior to joining the department, worked in both general and specialty hospitals and as well as rehabilitation services.

Submersion Report 2015

Dan Dao MPH, Injury Prevention Committee

All Submersions:

48% of submersions reported to the registry were children 1-4 years old, Texas 2015.

Pool Submersions:

74% of pool submersions reported to the registry were in children less than 5 years old, Texas 2015.

89% of pool submersions reported to the registry occurred during the months April through September, Texas 2015.

Nearly one-fifth of pool submersions reported to the registry occurred between the hours of 6pm and 7pm while almost three-quarters occurred between the hours of 3pm and 9pm, Texas 2015.

News from the web

Summer Safety Edition

Heatstroke Kills Children

It Can Happen to Anyone; Know the Facts to Protect Your Kids. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has provided tips on protecting children from being mistakenly left behind in a vehicle or when an unattended child gains access to a vehicle at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/heatstroke-kills-children>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a variety of information on staying safe during the summer. Visit the links below.

Make summer safe for kids- provides ways to keep your kids safe and healthy while they enjoy the summer fun. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/family/kids/summer/index.htm> for details.

Men's Summer Health and Safety Tips- From sun safety to diet and exercise. View tips at <https://www.cdc.gov/men/summer/>

Camping Health and Safety Tips- Follow these tips to help ensure your camping trip is safe and healthy <https://www.cdc.gov/family/camping/>.

Family Reunion Health and Safety Tips- Tips for making it a healthy and active time for all at <https://www.cdc.gov/family/reunions/index.htm>.

Consumer Advisory: Simple tips before hitting the road this summer

NHTSA has recently released their "Summer Driving Tips for 2017", focusing on prevention and planning. Their tips and video can be found at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/consumer-advisory-simple-tips-hitting-road-summer>.

Summer Safety Tips

The National Safety Council provides articles on a variety of summer safety topics including outdoor activities, heat, insects and fireworks. View articles at <http://www.nsc.org/learn/Pages/safety-events-summer-safety.aspx>

101 Critical Days of Summer

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides injury prevention tips at <https://training.fema.gov/monthly/june.aspx>.

Home Pool Safety

The American Red Cross and National Swimming Pool Foundation® have partnered to create an online Home Pool Essentials course that describes steps home pool owners can take to prevent tragedy and keep a well maintained pool or hot tub. Find information on the course and other pool safety tips at <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/water-safety/home-pool-safety>

Summer Safety

Austin-Travis County EMS provides tips on safety and prevention at <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/summer-safety>

Participation Request for a NHSTA Research Effort to Characterize Ground Ambulance Operator Training in EMS Systems

Finding ways to reduce ambulance crashes is of interest to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Operator training is one method that human factors professionals have used in virtually all domains to reduce human error and thereby increase the safety of operations. Although training for ground ambulance operators has been repeatedly identified as an important step in the emergency medical services safety system, not much is known about the extent and quality of such training taking place across the United States.

Study Objective

The objective of this project is to characterize ambulance operator training across the United States. NHTSA is interested in learning if and how agencies providing emergency medical services train anyone who gets behind the wheel and operates an ambulance on the roadway. The results of this study will allow the EMS community to not only understand how others across the United States provide and regulate training, but create a foundation on which to build future evidence-based training curricula or provide better guidance to agencies on best practices.

How You Can Help

NHTSA is asking that one person from your EMS agency who is either in charge of, or at least very familiar with, ambulance operations complete the survey at the link below. During the survey, you will be asked a variety of questions about the training provided to anyone who gets behind the wheel

and operates an ambulance on the roadway for your agency. The entire survey should take 15 minutes or less to complete. Participation in the study is voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous. No agency or personally identifiable information will be recorded. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

You can click on the link below to take the survey or copy and paste it into your browser if clicking does not work:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NHTSA2017Texas>

Fentanyl: Preventing Occupational Exposure to Emergency Responders Protecting Workers at Risk Emergency Responders and Law Enforcement

Fentanyl and its analogs pose a potential hazard to law enforcement, public health workers, and first responders who could unknowingly come into contact with these drugs in their different forms. Possible exposure routes vary based on the source of the fentanyl. While dermal absorption of fentanyl commonly occurs through prescribed use of the drug, inhalation of powder is the most likely exposure route for illicitly-manufactured fentanyl. Inhalation exposure can quickly result in respiratory depression. Emergency Services personnel may come into contact with these drugs on the street during the course of provide emergency health care activities. The CDC has provided the following guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fentanyl/risk.html>

Please be SAFE out there!

WEBINAR

DSSH will hold a phone conference and webinar for EMS educators, providers and personnel about the Jurisprudence Exam requirements.

July 31, 2017, at 3:00p.m.

Call in phone number, toll free: 1-877-820-7831

Participant Passcode: 217965

Web Meeting Address:

<https://stateoftx-dshs.centurylinkccc.com/CenturylinkWeb/EMS>

External links to other sites are intended to be informational and do not have the endorsement of the Texas Department of State Health Services. These sites may also not be accessible to persons with disabilities.

NEWS FROM THE WEB

FEATURED ARTICLES

EPCC EMT Dual Credit Program Wins National Championship (Story is from the El Paso Herald Post)

<http://elpasoheraldpost.com/epcc-emt-dual-credit-program-wins-national-championship/>

Officer Safety Alert from the DEA: Carfentanil: A dangerous new factor in the U.S. opioid crisis

https://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2016/hq092216_attach.pdf

The Minnesota Department of Health has published a Community Paramedic (CP) Toolkit to assist employers and organizations who are planning to hire Community Paramedics. The toolkit and background resources are available on our Toolkit webpage at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/orhpc/toolkit.html>

[Calif. EMT Sued After Posting Graphic Photos of Patient's Injuries Online](#)

The 21-year-old victim lost a leg in an motorcycle crash.

Additional Reading

Homes for Texas Heroes Home Loan Program: www.tsahc.org/homeownership/loans-down-payment-assistance The program, spearheaded by the Texas legislature, provides a 30-year fixed rate home loan to Texas EMS personnel, firefighters, peace officers and others. In addition, this program offers down payment and closing cost assistance of up to 5% of the mortgage loan amount, in the form of a grant.

Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons: <http://bulletin.facs.org/>

The Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons is published monthly by the American College of Surgeons.

Washington Update: <http://www.nasemso.org/NewsAndPublications/TheWashingtonUpdate/>

The Washington Update is produced bi-monthly by the National Association of State EMS Officials in cooperation with NHTSA OEMS, with funds also provided by HHS EMSC.

NACo County News: <http://www.naco.org/newsroom/countynews/Current%20Issue/1-13-14/Pages/default.aspx> The voice of American counties.

The Pony Express: <https://www.bcm.edu/departments/pediatrics/texasemsc/?pmid=15790>

Official Newsletter of the EMSC State Partnership, Texas.

Integrated Healthcare Delivery: <http://ihdelivery.com/>

Integrated Healthcare Delivery focuses on improving the patient experience of care through inter-professional collaborations.

Questions, comments or suggestions about *Texas EMS Trauma News*? Contact us at EMSTraumaNews@dshs.texas.gov