

Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and Paramedics are trained to provide emergency care to people who have suffered from an illness or an injury outside of the hospital setting. EMTs and Paramedics work under protocols approved by a physician medical director to recognize, assess, and manage medical emergencies and transport patients to definitive medical care. EMTs provide basic life support, and EMT-Paramedics provide advanced life support.



History

The emergency medical technician-paramedic was first recognized as an allied health occupation in 1975 by the AMA for the purpose of accrediting entry-level educational programs in the profession, with educational *Standards (Essentials)* used to evaluate EMT-paramedic programs seeking accreditation adopted in 1978.

Today, programs are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) in collaboration with the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the EMS Professions (CoAEMSP). The *Standards* were revised most recently in 2005.



Career Description

EMTs and Paramedics may be employed by a private ambulance company, fire department, police department, public EMS agency, private ambulance company, hospital, or combination of the above. EMS responders may be paid or volunteers in the community.

EMTs must be proficient in First Aid, and training is centered on recognizing and treating life-threatening conditions outside the hospital environment. EMTs learn the basics of how to handle cardiac and respiratory arrest, heart attacks, seizures, diabetic emergencies, respiratory problems, and other medical emergencies. They also learn how to manage traumatic injuries such as falls, fractures, lacerations, and burns. EMTs also are introduced into patient assessment, history taking, and vital signs.

EMTs perform CPR, artificial ventilations, oxygen administration, basic airway management, defibrillation using an AED, spinal immobilization, vital signs, bandaging/splinting, and may administer Nitroglycerin, Glucose, Epinephrine, and Albuterol in special circumstances.

Paramedics perform all of the skills performed by an EMT. In addition, they perform advanced airway management, such as endotracheal intubation, under medical supervision and from a base station, usually in a hospital emergency room. They obtain and interpret electrocardiographs (ECGs), introduce intravenous lines, and administer numerous emergency medications. Paramedics assess ECG tracings and defibrillate. They have extensive training in patient assessment and are exposed to a variety of clinical and field experiences during training.



Salary

Earnings of EMTs and Paramedics depend on the employment setting and geographic location as well as the individual's training and experience. Median annual earnings of EMTs and Paramedics were \$25,310 in May 2004. The middle 50 percent earned between \$19,970 and \$33,210. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$16,090, and the highest 10

percent earned more than \$43,240. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of EMTs and Paramedics in May 2004 were:

- Local government \$27,710
- General medical and surgical hospitals \$26,590
- Other ambulatory health care services \$23,130

Those in emergency medical services who are part of fire or police departments receive the same benefits as firefighters or police officers. For example, many are covered by pension plans that provide retirement at half pay after 20 or 25 years of service or if the worker is disabled in the line of duty.

For more information, refer to www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary.



Educational Programs

In most locations in the United States, the minimum level of education that most EMS professionals have before entering the workforce is that of an EMT. Individuals who work as firefighters or police officers may perform some emergency medical work when trained as first responders. Some Paramedic programs provide an all-inclusive program that includes both EMT and Paramedic training in one program. All levels of EMS training are set by the federal government through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

EMT training is offered at community colleges, technical schools, hospitals, and universities as well as EMS, fire, and police academies. Those interested in EMT training should contact their state's EMS Office. Those interested in Paramedic training should contact the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the EMS Professionals (CoAEMSP). Both of these agencies can help potential students find local training.

Length. EMT training varies from 2 to 6 months, depending on the training site and hours of class scheduled per week. There are training programs that have class every day for several months for those interested in quick completion. Longer programs are available to accommodate students who have family, a full-time job, or other responsibilities that limit their available time for education. Approximate training requirements are:

- Emergency Medical Responder 40 hours of training
- EMT 110 hours of training
- Advanced EMT 200-400 hours of training
- Paramedic 1,000 or more hours of training

Prerequisites. An EMT student is expected to be a high school graduate or the equivalent and to meet the physical and mental demands of the occupation. Paramedic students must have completed their EMT training prior to enrollment in most Paramedic courses unless they are enrolled in a joint EMT and Paramedic program. Some Paramedic programs are part of Associate of Applied Science (AAS) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree programs offered at colleges and universities. Generally, a Certificate of Completion is offered for those who do not receive a college degree.

Curriculum. EMT and Paramedic training are composed of in-classroom, didactic instruction; in-hospital clinical practice; and a supervised field internship on an ambulance. Courses typically are competency-based and supported by performance assessments.

Instruction provides students with knowledge of acute and critical changes in physiology and psychological and clinical symptoms that they might encounter in an emergency medical situation.



Inquiries

Careers

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT)
PO Box 1400
Clinton, MS 39060-1400
800 34-NAEMT
www.naemt.org

Certification/Licensure

National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)
Rocco V. Morando Bldg
Box 29233
6610 Busch Blvd

Columbus, OH 43229-0233
614 888-4484
www.nremt.org

Program Accreditation

Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) in collaboration with:
Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the EMS Professions (CoAEMSP)
4101 West Green Oaks Blvd
Suite 305-599
Arlington, TX 76016
817 330-0080
E-mail: george@coaemsp.org

Note: Adapted in part from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2006-07 Edition, Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics, on the Internet at www.bls.gov/oco/ocos101.htm.