

# Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and Paramedics are educated to provide prehospital 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 critically ill or injured patients to definitive medical care at a hospital. EMTs provide Basic Life Support (BLS), and EMT-Paramedics provide Advanced Life Support (ALS).

## History

In 1975, the AMA recognized the Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic as an allied health occupation for the purpose of accrediting entry-level educational programs in the profession, and the educational *Standards (Essentials)* to evaluate EMT-Paramedic programs seeking accreditation were 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 most recently revised 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 serve as volunteers in the community.

EMTs must be proficient in Basic Life Support (BLS), 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 Automated External Defibrillator (AED), spinal immobilization, vital signs, bandaging/splinting, and, under the direction of a physician, 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 department. They obtain and interpret electrocardiographs (ECGs), introduce intravenous lines, and administer numerous emergency medications. Paramedics assess ECG tracings and defibrillate. They have extensive education in patient assessment and are exposed to a variety of clinical and field experiences during their education.

## Salary

Earnings of EMTs and Paramedics depend on the employment setting and geographic location as well as the individual's education and experience. Median annual earnings of EMTs and Paramedics were \$30,000 in May 2010. The middle 50% earned between \$23,650 and \$39,250. The lowest 10% earned less than \$19,360, and the highest 10% earned more than \$51,460. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of EMTs and Paramedics in May 2010 were:

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| • Local government                       | \$30,000 or greater |
| • General medical and surgical hospitals | \$26,590            |
| • Other ambulatory health care services  | \$23,650            |

*Note:* These data may not accurately reflect compensation for both EMTs and EMT-Paramedics, as these fields have different training and education requirements and different salary levels as well. Combining salary data for EMTs and EMT-Paramedics may skew these data lower (or higher) than what may be occurring in the marketplace.

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 salary information, go to [www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary](http://www.ama-assn.org/go/hpsalary).

## Employment Outlook

The job opportunities for EMS professionals are expected to grow 9% from 2008-2018, about as fast as the average for all occupations, according to the US Department of Labor.

## 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 education 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. For those interested in Paramedic education, contact CAAHEP and the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the EMS

Professionals (CoAEMSP). Both of these agencies can help potential students find local training and educational opportunities. Beginning in 2013, all paramedics must graduate from CAAHEP-accredited programs to be eligible for national certification from the National Registry of EMTs.

**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 classes every day for several months for those interested in a 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 educational 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 education

**Prerequisites.** An EMT student is expected to be a high school graduate or the equivalent (GED), and to meet the physical and mental demands of the occupation. Paramedic students must have completed their EMT education prior to enrollment in most paramedic education courses unless they are jointly enrolled in an EMT and paramedic program. Some paramedic education programs are part of the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree programs offered at colleges and universities. A Certificate of Completion is generally offered to those who did not complete a college degree.

**Curriculum.** EMT and paramedic education programs 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 physiological, 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](http://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](http://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](mailto:george@coaemsp.org)

*Note:* Adapted in part from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2010-2011 Edition, Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics, at [www.bls.gov/oco/ocos101.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos101.htm).