




New York State
Department of Health
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services

POLICY STATEMENT

Supersedes/Updates: NEW

No. 09 - 07

Date: June 17, 2009

**Re: Security and Safety
of EMS Response
Vehicles**

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BACKGROUND

Each year there are approximately 3 million EMS responses in New York State. Occasionally, across the country EMS vehicles are stolen and damaged. A study titled, "Ambulance Snatching: How Vulnerable Are We"¹ identifies a sampling of 151 ambulance arrivals observed at emergency departments in several states. The average time present at the Emergency Department was 21.5 minutes, 23.2% of the vehicles were left with the engine running, 26.5% were left with doors or compartments open, 90.1% were left unattended and 84.1% were left unlocked.

Occasionally the Department receives a report that an unattended EMS vehicle has been stolen from the scene of a call or from the parking lot of a hospital. Additionally, there has been information distributed internationally indicating that stolen ambulances may be used to gain access to critical areas in a terrorist attack.

EMS operations create many potential exposures for loss or theft of equipment. In many cases, responding EMS vehicles are staffed with two EMS providers. The ambulance or non-transporting response car arrives on the scene and the providers go to the patient, leaving the EMS vehicle unattended. Additionally, vehicles are frequently left unattended with doors unlocked or open, cabinets unlocked, and possibly the engine running while its' left outside of business establishments; left outside of the Emergency Department; or on the scene of an emergency response. EMS vehicles are also often stored in an unsecured station or other location.

PURPOSE

This policy is intended to encourage EMS agencies to develop policies and procedures that will improve the security and safety of their response vehicles and minimize the possibility of unauthorized use or theft.

Some examples of common best practices, if appropriate for the situation, would include, but not be limited to the following:

- Leaving a crew member with the vehicle,
- Shutting off the engine and removing the ignition key from any EMS vehicle,
- Locking the vehicle and its exterior storage compartments when left unattended,
- The installation of a commercial anti theft device,
- Securing of vehicles and contents when not in service or being repaired,
- The routine inspection and prompt reporting of missing equipment,

There will be times, such as during weather extremes that may require the EMS vehicle to remain running in order to keep the patient compartment warm or cool and maintain medications within their safe temperature range. With these considerations in mind, EMS agencies should have in place, and implement policies for securing the vehicle.

Each agency should perform a risk analysis to evaluate their risks and vulnerabilities of vehicle security. Policies and procedures should be developed for the identified risks that in turn, will reduce the opportunity for their vehicles to be stolen or misused.

Should an agency experience the theft of an emergency response vehicle, after the appropriate law enforcement and insurance notifications have been made, notification must be made to the Department of Health, Bureau of EMS in accordance with 10 NYCRR Part 800.21(p)(11)(i).

Issued by: Operations/Disaster Preparedness Units

Approval: Bureau of EMS Director

ⁱ Donald W. Alves, MD and Richard A Bissell, PhD, "Ambulance Snatching: How Vulnerable Are We?", The Journal of Emergency Medicine, Volume 25, Issue 2, Pages 211-214 (August 2003)