

1: Introduction to Emergency Medical Services

HOSA Alignment: Emergency Preparedness Category - EMS Systems Knowledge

NREMT Alignment: EMS Operations and Professional Standards

Lesson Objective: You will learn about the Emergency Medical Services system and understand how different healthcare professionals work together to help people during emergencies. You will identify the role of an EMT within this system and recognize why continuing your education and skills throughout your career matters for providing quality patient care.

Top 5 Important Items:

Introduction to Emergency Medical Services

1. EMS System Structure

You need to understand that EMS is a coordinated network of people and resources working together. This system includes emergency dispatchers, EMTs, paramedics, hospital staff, and support services that ensure patients receive care from the moment someone calls 911 until they reach the hospital.

2. EMT Scope of Practice

You must know what you're legally allowed to do as an EMT. Your scope of practice defines the specific medical procedures and treatments you can perform, which protects both you and your patients.

3. Professional Standards and Ethics

You will follow strict professional standards that include patient confidentiality, respectful treatment, and honest communication. These ethical guidelines help you make the right decisions even in stressful emergency situations.

4. Quality Improvement

You participate in ongoing review of patient care to identify what works well and what needs improvement. This process helps the entire EMS system provide better care over time.

5. Continuing Education

You commit to learning throughout your career because medical knowledge and techniques constantly evolve. Regular training keeps your skills sharp and ensures you provide the best possible care to every patient you encounter.



Emergency Medical Services transforms ordinary people into life-savers who make split-second decisions that determine whether someone lives or dies, and you could be one of them.

Your Future in Emergency Medical Services

Understanding the EMS System

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is more than flashing lights—it's a coordinated system of people and tools delivering care when seconds matter. When someone dials 911, they activate a chain of events involving emergency dispatchers, EMTs, paramedics, firefighters, police officers, hospital emergency departments, and specialized medical teams. Each person in this system has a specific role, and everyone works together to save lives.

The EMS system operates at different levels of care. Basic Life Support (BLS) providers like EMTs handle essential emergency care including CPR, bleeding control, and patient stabilization. Advanced Life Support (ALS) providers such as paramedics perform more complex procedures like administering medications and advanced airway management. Understanding these levels helps you recognize where you fit in the healthcare team and when you need to call for additional resources.

What EMTs Actually Do

As an EMT, you serve as a critical link between an emergency scene and the hospital. Your responsibilities go far beyond driving an ambulance. You assess patients by checking vital signs, asking questions about symptoms, and examining injuries. You provide immediate treatment for conditions like severe bleeding, breathing problems, chest pain, and broken bones. You make quick decisions about which patients need immediate transport and which can wait for additional help.

Your scope of practice defines exactly what you can and cannot do. This legal framework protects patients and keeps you within your training boundaries. EMTs can perform



The average EMT makes decisions in 60 seconds that doctors in hospitals have hours to consider, which develops incredible critical thinking skills that transfer to any career.

skills like CPR, use automated external defibrillators, assist patients with their prescribed medications, control bleeding with bandages and tourniquets, immobilize spinal injuries, and deliver emergency childbirth care. You cannot perform advanced procedures reserved for paramedics, such as starting intravenous lines or administering most medications. Staying within your scope of practice isn't limiting—it ensures you provide safe, appropriate care based on your level of training.

Professional Standards That Guide Your Work

Working as an EMT means following strict professional and ethical standards. Patient confidentiality is sacred. You will see people during their most vulnerable moments, and you must protect their privacy by never sharing patient information except with other healthcare providers directly involved in their care. This rule applies even after your shift ends—you can't post about calls on social media or discuss patients with friends.

Some EMTs work at concerts, sporting events, and theme parks, which means you could combine a career in emergency medicine with access to exciting venues and events.

Your Future in Emergency Medical Services

Professional behavior extends to how you treat every patient. You provide the same high-quality care whether someone is homeless or wealthy, kind or rude, easy to help or challenging. You remain calm during chaos, communicate clearly with patients and their families, and work cooperatively with other emergency responders. You show up on time, maintain your physical fitness, keep your uniform clean, and represent your agency with pride.

Ethical decision-making becomes part of your daily routine. Sometimes you'll face difficult situations where the right choice isn't obvious. Maybe a patient refuses treatment even though you believe they need it. Perhaps you arrive at a scene where resources are limited and multiple people need help. Your training includes ethical frameworks to guide these decisions, but you also develop judgment through experience and reflection.

You play a direct role in quality improvement by documenting every call thoroughly and honestly. Your patient care reports become data that helps the entire system improve. If you perform CPR on a cardiac arrest patient, someone will later review that report to see if compressions started quickly, were performed correctly, and continued without long interruptions. This review isn't about catching mistakes—it's about learning what works and what doesn't.



The Star of Life's six blue points represent the core functions of EMS: detection, reporting, response, on-scene care, care in transit, and transfer to definitive care.

Quality improvement also includes peer review, where experienced EMTs examine calls and provide constructive feedback. This might feel uncomfortable at first, but it's one of the best ways to develop your skills. You learn from your experiences and from the experiences of others. Over time, you'll participate in reviewing others' calls, sharing your knowledge with newer EMTs.

Growing Through Quality Improvement

EMS constantly checks its own pulse through quality improvement, studying reports to spot what's working and what's not. This process involves reviewing patient care reports, analyzing response times, studying patient outcomes, and gathering feedback from hospital staff. When patterns emerge—like multiple EMTs making the same mistake or response times increasing in certain neighborhoods—the agency can address these issues through additional training, policy changes, or resource allocation.

Committing to Lifelong Learning

Your EMT certification is just the beginning of your education, not the end. Medical research constantly produces new findings about the best ways to treat patients. Techniques that were standard practice five years ago might now be considered outdated or even harmful. For example, EMTs used to backboard every patient with a possible

The modern EMS system as we know it today only began developing in the 1960s, making it one of the youngest healthcare professions.

Your Future in Emergency Medical Services

spinal injury, but current research shows this can sometimes cause more harm than good. Continuing education ensures you stay current with these changes.

Most states require EMTs to complete a certain number of continuing education hours every few years to maintain certification. These courses cover topics like new treatment protocols, refresher training on essential skills, and updates on equipment and technology. Some EMTs pursue additional certifications in specialized areas like wilderness medicine, tactical EMS, or critical care transport. These extra qualifications open doors to different career opportunities and make you more valuable to employers.

Professional development includes more than just formal classes. You learn by asking questions during calls, reading EMS journals and websites, attending conferences, and seeking mentorship from experienced providers. The best EMTs remain curious and humble, always looking for ways to improve their knowledge and skills.

Building Your Career Path

Starting as an EMT can lead to numerous career opportunities. Many EMTs work for ambulance services, fire departments, hospitals, or private companies. Some serve in industrial settings, at special events, or with search and rescue teams. Others work in 911 systems responding to emergency calls, while some provide non-emergency interfacility transports.

Your EMT experience also serves as a foundation for advancement. Many paramedics, nurses, physician assistants, and doctors started as EMTs. The patient care skills, medical knowledge, and real-world experience you gain are valuable in any healthcare career. Even if you don't stay in EMS forever, the confidence and competence you develop will serve you throughout your professional life.



EMTs respond to everything from heart attacks and car accidents to helping people who have fallen or need assistance with their medical conditions.

The EMS community values professionalism, teamwork, and dedication to serving others. When you join this field, you become part of a tradition of people who run toward emergencies while others run away. You'll experience the satisfaction of making a real difference in your community, often during

people's worst days. This responsibility requires serious commitment, but it also provides rewards that few other careers can match. Your career begins with learning the system—and committing to the discipline, compassion, and teamwork that define EMS.

The Call to Step Up

Every EMT has a moment when the siren sounds and they realize—they are the calm in someone's chaos. The person who shows up when others can't. Becoming an EMT isn't just a job; it's a commitment to courage, compassion, and community. If you're ready to make every second count, your future in emergency medicine starts now.

1: Introduction to Emergency Medical Services - Guided Notes

Three Most Important Concepts

Identify and explain the three most important topics you learned from the article.

Concept 1: _____

Concept 2: _____

Concept 3: _____

Main Concept Overview

Word Bank: quality improvement, continuing education, scope of practice, patient confidentiality, emergency dispatchers

Emergency Medical Services is a coordinated system of professionals, equipment, and resources that work together to provide medical care during emergencies. The EMS system includes _____ who answer 911 calls, EMTs and paramedics who provide patient care, and hospital staff who continue treatment. EMTs operate within a specific _____ that defines what procedures they can legally perform. Professional standards require EMTs to maintain _____ and treat all patients with respect regardless of their background. The system improves through _____ processes that review patient care and identify areas for enhancement. EMTs must commit to _____ throughout their careers to stay current with new medical knowledge and techniques.

Matching Section

Match each term from the article with its correct description.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. Basic Life Support (BLS) | A. Legal framework defining what medical procedures an EMT can perform |
| _____ 2. Scope of Practice | B. Process of reviewing patient care to identify improvements |
| _____ 3. Quality Improvement | C. Level of care including CPR, bleeding control, and patient stabilization |
| _____ 4. Advanced Life Support (ALS) | D. Ongoing training required to maintain certification and stay current |
| _____ 5. Continuing Education | E. Higher level of care with complex procedures like administering medications |

1: Introduction to Emergency Medical Services - Guided Notes Continued

True/False Questions

- 1. ____ EMTs can perform all the same medical procedures as paramedics.
- 2. ____ Patient confidentiality means you cannot share patient information on social media.
- 3. ____ Your EMT certification is the end of your medical education.
- 4. ____ Quality improvement reviews are designed to catch and punish mistakes.
- 5. ____ The EMS system includes emergency dispatchers, EMTs, paramedics, and hospital staff.

Fill in the Table

List five key responsibilities that EMTs perform during emergency calls.

EMT Responsibility	Example or Description
Assess patients	
Provide immediate treatment	
Control bleeding	
Make transport decisions	
Document patient care	

Application Questions

1. Why is it important for EMTs to stay within their scope of practice rather than attempting procedures they learned about but aren't certified to perform?
- _____
- _____
2. How does quality improvement benefit both EMTs and the patients they serve in the EMS system?
- _____
- _____

1: Introduction to Emergency Medical Services - Hypotheticals

Scenario 1: Vital Signs

You're working your first shift as a newly certified EMT. You respond to a call for a patient having difficulty breathing. Your paramedic partner is treating another critical patient in a different room. You remember learning about a medication in your advanced training course that could help this patient, but it's not within your EMT scope of practice. The patient's family is begging you to do something more to help.

- Questions:**
- A. What should you do in this situation and why does staying within your scope of practice matter?
 - B. How does your scope of practice actually protect both you and the patient?
 - C. What options do you have to get this patient the care they need while following professional standards?

Scenario 2: Quality Improvement Review

Your EMS agency is conducting a quality improvement review of cardiac arrest calls from the past six months. The data shows that CPR compressions are being interrupted for too long during patient moves. Your supervisor asks all EMTs to attend a training session on performing continuous CPR during transitions. Some EMTs complain that they already know how to do CPR and don't need more training.

- Questions:**
- A. How does this quality improvement process benefit the EMS system and patients?
 - B. Why is attending refresher training important even when you already know the skill?
 - C. What role do patient care reports play in helping the agency identify this problem?

1: Introduction to Emergency Medical Services - Hypotheticals Continued

Scenario 3: Professional Standards Challenge

You're completing your clinical rotation at a busy emergency department. You help treat a well-known local athlete who was injured during a game. After your shift, your friends ask what happened to the player because they saw you working on the ambulance that transported him. They want to know details about his condition and whether he'll be able to play in the championship game.

Questions:

- A. How should you respond to your friends' questions about the patient?
- B. Why does patient confidentiality apply even after your shift ends and away from work?
- C. What could happen if EMTs shared patient information on social media or with friends?

Scenario 4: Continuing Education Decision

You've been working as an EMT for two years and love your job. Your certification renewal is coming up, and you need to complete continuing education hours. You can choose between taking the minimum required courses online or attending a three-day conference that costs more money and uses your vacation time but offers specialized training in wilderness EMS and tactical medicine scenarios.

Questions:

- A. What are the benefits of pursuing education beyond the minimum requirements?
- B. How might specialized certifications in areas like wilderness medicine expand your career opportunities?
- C. Why does medical knowledge need to be updated regularly even though you're already certified?

1: Introduction to Emergency Medical Services - Reflection Questions

1

How does understanding the different levels of care in the EMS system (BLS vs. ALS) help you see where you fit in the broader healthcare team?

Think about how EMTs and paramedics work together during emergencies. Consider when you might need to call for additional resources.

2

How might your commitment to continuing education throughout your EMS career affect the patients you treat five or ten years from now?

Medical techniques and knowledge change constantly based on new research. Consider your responsibility to stay current with these changes.

3

What does it mean to you personally to be part of a profession where people “run toward emergencies while others run away”?

Reflect on what motivates you to consider a career in emergency services. Think about personal qualities you have that would make you effective in this role and areas you might need to develop.

1: Introduction to Emergency Medical Services - Case Study

TERM	DEFINITION
Advanced Life Support (ALS)	
Basic Life Support (BLS)	
Continuing Education	
Emergency Medical Services (EMS)	
Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)	
Patient Confidentiality	
Professional Standards	
Quality Improvement	
Scope of Practice	
Vital Signs	

Introduction to Emergency Medical Services

C X D Z H C X K N Y L N G H O K S S X D C R H I R Z S V V N D
Y P K Z L F U F W O R S R J O X C Y U V H H V G O H G I Y Q O
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W A F F L J G A C R T T N S N Z C I O R F H W M J J X R O P X
C T R L E I C I S R W A L N A X G T W K A X K I L Z F A G Q K
U I X R I S T H L I H C B V W I A D A Z K C M U D U J Q S O J
G E U Q V D S Y I E C J G V B K E P N Y J T T O Z O K Z S R H
Q N F C C E W I I Z J L L V H C T P I Q L C C I F T L W H B N
A T X L Y R H D O M G A I T P T R B X Y C D F F C A O V Z A H
T C I Z Y H J T U N P A G F E F R N T C H D F M X E L I N Y K
M O U U N T S P K W A R U R E V M C K B I P X E F K B T W O Y
L N L V V B X Y Y P S L O U B S L Q M G G F L C S I N A Q D L
F F Y I H I R H L A F S S V K S U X Q L H J N K Z M P L X B J
G I X X Z T L O X K P V D T E Z I P H P A A Z V J Y V S I P W
I D L K L Y J A P P N L K M A M N A P G K N G P I L F I H V N
Q E F O C J J M B P X N D O J N E S Z O D N S F A N Y G I S S
U N N G F A U Z Z G M W N V V B D N Z P R Z G W A W X N R Z E
H T H K Q J V D Z B O J X O L X X A T A M T O W D C T S S P M
T I B B O S A F P H N H M H W N N H R L B T Z Y D A L N Q M Q
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L I K U Z U V V X N T T B G E X F H A I C Q S U T Y P E A Y K
X T E M E R G E N C Y M E D I C A L T E C H N I C I A N B N O
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K J M T I R D H W O N V D P E F V W W D Y Z S K V N E K D G G

Scope of Practice

Quality Improvement

Professional Standards

Patient Confidentiality

Emergency Medical Technician

Emergency Medical Services

Continuing Education

Basic Life Support

Advanced Life Support

Vital Signs

Introduction to Emergency Medical Services

Across

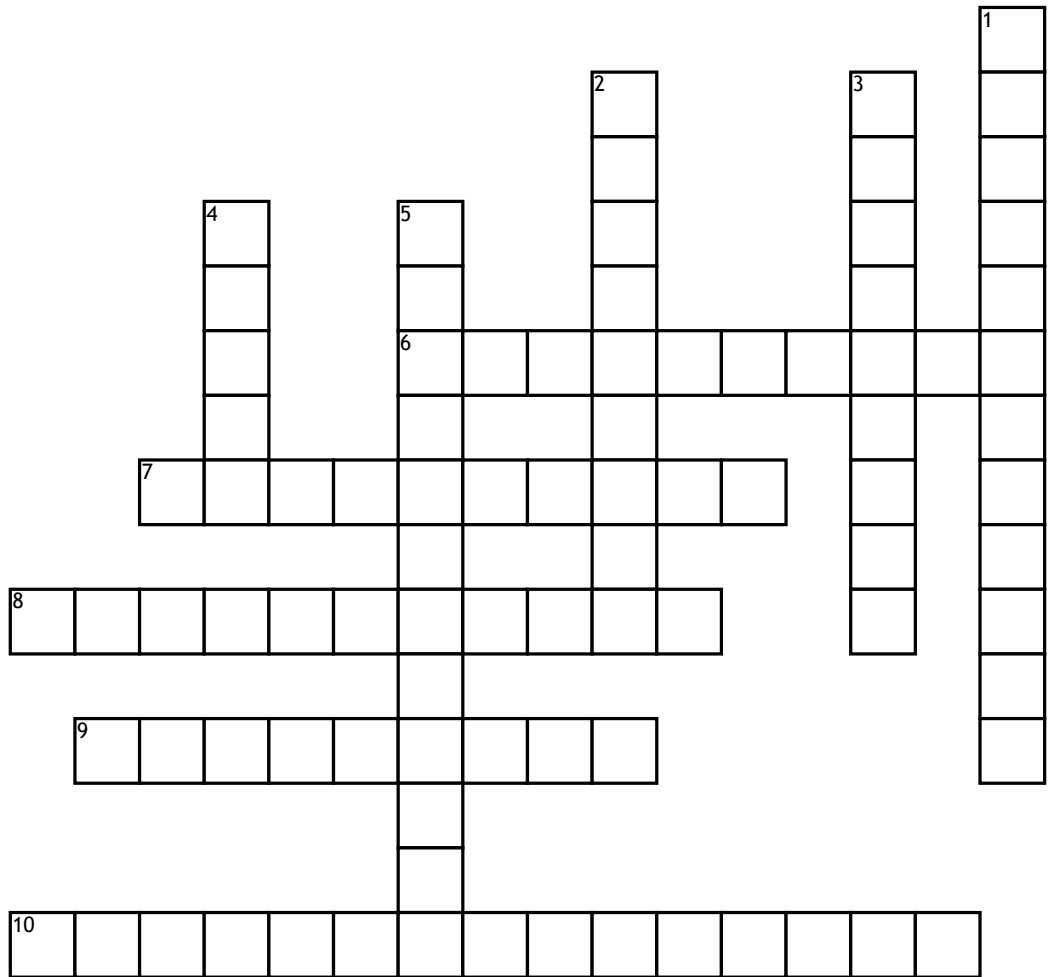
6. Basic measurements of the body's essential functions including heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, and temperature that EMTs check to assess a patient's condition. (Two words)

7. A certified healthcare professional who provides basic life support care and emergency medical treatment at emergency scenes and during transport to medical facilities. Emergency Medical ____

8. The ongoing process of reviewing patient care reports, analyzing response times, and studying outcomes to identify problems and create solutions that enhance EMS system performance. Quality ____

9. Essential emergency care that includes CPR, bleeding control, patient stabilization, and use of automated external defibrillators, provided by EMTs and other first responders. ____

10. The professional and legal requirement to protect patient information and privacy by not sharing medical details except with healthcare providers directly involved in care. Patient ____



Down

1. Guidelines and expectations for ethical behavior, respectful treatment, honest communication, and quality care that all EMTs must follow in their work. ____ Standards

2. Ongoing training and coursework required throughout an EMT's career to maintain certification, stay current with new medical knowledge, and improve skills. Continuing ____

3. A coordinated system of people, equipment, and resources that work together to provide medical care during emergencies, from the 911 call through hospital treatment. ____ Medical Services

4. The legal framework that defines exactly which medical procedures and treatments an EMT is authorized to perform based on their level of training and certification. ____ of Practice

5. Higher level of emergency care that includes complex procedures such as administering medications, advanced airway management, and starting intravenous lines, typically provided by paramedics. ____ Support