EMT Operations: Driving, Scene Hazards, Lifting and Infection Control

Emergency driving law and road handling, unit readiness, licensure and mutual aid, technical-rescue scenes, rail and oxidizer hazmat, cleaning and reprocessing, safe moves and crew stress

Medic Basics
medicbasics.com · checked Oct 2026

EMERGENCY DRIVING

SITUATION	RULE
Exemptions (red light, speed)	Many states: only with siren and lights both on; due regard always
Siren off, lights on	Ordinary vehicle: obey the speed limit
Traffic yields right	Pass on the left, ready to stop
Family wants to follow	No: drive separately, obey signals; give the address
Hydroplaning	No brakes; slow gradually; keep the steering steady (classic teaching)
Sharp curve or ramp	Brake on the straight; enter at a safe speed
Rain	Slow down early; avoid standing water

UNIT READINESS

- CO alarm in the patient compartment: fresh air, evaluate patient and crew; unit out of service until the exhaust is inspected
- No portable oxygen or suction: unavailable until restocked; linen and dressings can wait
- Equipment and quantities: set by the medical director and agency protocols

SYSTEM AND LAW

- National Registry certifies; the state licenses. No license, no practice, even supervised
- All units committed: request mutual aid now, not after assessing
- Parent with capacity refuses a minor non-emergency: offer care, document the guardian and the advice
- Consent, refusal, DNR, HIPAA: EMS Operations

SCENE HAZARDS BEYOND SIZE-UP

SCENE	FIRST ACTION
Several people, same symptoms, one building	Suspect CO or a chemical: stage outside, fire and hazmat, evacuate
Trench collapse	Stay out; machines off; everyone back from the edge
Person sinking in a grain bin	Auger off and locked out; nobody enters
Hand caught in an escalator or machine	Hit the emergency stop; then call for extrication
Weapon found on a patient	Out of reach; police take it; handle little, document

SAFETY Pulse oximetry reads CO-bound hemoglobin as normal: a good SpO_2 does not rule out CO.

HAZMAT ADDITIONS

- Train: crew carries the consist; match the car's reporting mark and number from a distance
- Yellow placard, 5.1: oxidizer, makes fires burn hotter
- ERG, placards, zones: EMS Operations

REACHING A PATIENT IN A VEHICLE

- Scene safe, car stable: try every door before forcing anything
- Locked: break the window farthest from the patient; shield the patient
- Prying, roof removal: rescue crews

CLEANING AND REPROCESSING

ITEM OR CASE	DO
Laryngoscope blade, airway device	Semicritical: clean, then high-level disinfection
Stretcher, cuff, cables	Noncritical: EPA-registered surface disinfectant
Norovirus	Label must list norovirus; keep wet for its contact time
Bleach	Never mix with ammonia or acid: toxic gas
After a TB transport	N95 on, doors open, exhaust fan on until the air clears (extrapolated from the CDC room rule)

LIFTING AND MOVING

PATIENT	MOVE
Heavy, lift device in the room	Use it, with a trained operator
Wheeled stretcher, distance	Push from behind, handle near waist height
Fragile skin	Lift on a draw sheet, no sliding; pad rails; no tape
Very obese, breathless	Keep upright; lying flat can stop ventilation
Varicose bleed controlled	Flat, leg raised; no stair chair

CREW STRESS

Partner freezes mid-call: hand the task to another rescuer, keep care going, keep him with the crew, not alone. Stress First Aid: Check, Coordinate, Cover, Calm, Connect, Competence, Confidence.

Sources (37) are listed with links at medicbasics.com/sheets/emt-operations-scene-moving.html. For education and exam preparation only. Not medical advice; follow current guidelines and your institution's protocols. Medic Basics is an independent study aid not affiliated with any certifying body.