

THE TEXAS EMS AGENCY:

AN ESSENTIAL PART OF EVERY TEXAS COMMUNITY



EMS IN TEXAS

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies are an essential part of every Texas community. They serve a unique role in the state's health care delivery system: EMS agencies are the only segment of the health care industry designed to respond to the location of a patient suffering from an acute onset of illness or a traumatic injury, provide patients with initial care on scene, and provide timely access to a specialized segment of the health care system, such as a trauma hospital or stroke center.

Thanks to recent advances in the fields of trauma, sepsis, and cardiac/stroke events, Texas' EMS agencies have saved countless lives. For many of these issues, every minute matters, and paramedics are prepared to provide valuable responses during initial contact and transfer to a hospital.

“IF YOU’VE SEEN ONE EMS AGENCY IN TEXAS, THEN YOU HAVE SEEN ONE EMS AGENCY IN TEXAS.”

“A NEW DAY IN THE FIREHOUSE”

According to Governing, fire departments across the county responded to 35.3 million calls in 2016, and that is more than three times as many as in 1981. However, the number of fires responded to by the fire departments fell to less than half of the 1981 figure. Fires made up less than 4 percent of the fire department calls in 2016. Meanwhile, medical emergencies accounted for 68 percent of the fire department responses in 2016.

FUNDING IS A CHALLENGE

EMS agencies rely on a variety of revenue sources to fund the capital equipment, personnel, and training necessary to save lives. The funding formula includes commercial and government payers, government grants, taxes, and even charity events such as barbecue dinners to help keep rural EMS agencies in operation.

SAVING A HEART ATTACK VICTIM

When symptoms of a heart attack begin to present, cardiologists recommend that a patient call 9-1-1 instead of driving to a hospital. In many EMS agencies, paramedics have the ability to begin treatment within the field. Paramedics can assess the patient's vital signs and heart activity and trigger the cardiac catheterization lab at the hospital. Research finds that patients who have access to an angioplasty within 90 minutes of first medical contact typically have the best outcomes.

EVERY EMS AGENCY IS DIFFERENT

Over 800 entities are licensed by the Texas Department of State Health Services to provide EMS service to Texas communities. Texas is such a large and diverse state that it results in the use of a number of different EMS models.



FIRE DEPARTMENT MODEL

Some communities have EMS operations that are embedded in the community's fire department. The fire departments in the cities of San Antonio, Dallas, Houston, Lewisville, and Flower Mound have EMS agencies embedded in them.



“THIRD SERVICE”

Most Texas communities feature two different services: fire and police. Some communities feature an EMS service that is separate from fire and police, and this results in a “third service.” Austin-Travis County EMS and the City of Schertz EMS are examples of a “third service” EMS model.



HOSPITAL MODEL

Some Texas communities rely on EMS that is operated by the local hospital system. Examples include UT Health East Texas in Tyler, Coryell Memorial Healthcare System EMS, and Hopkins County EMS.



CONTRACT EMS

Some communities outsource their 9-1-1 service to a private company. Examples include the City of Arlington, Bastrop County, and the City of Amarillo.



NON-PROFITS

Some communities rely on EMS agencies that have been chartered as emergency service districts or non-profits. The Harris County Emergency Corps is an example, and it was Texas' first EMS agency when it was created in 1927.