



ENSURE A STRONG EMS INFRASTRUCTURE IN TEXAS

SOLUTIONS FOR THE EMS PERSONNEL SHORTAGE

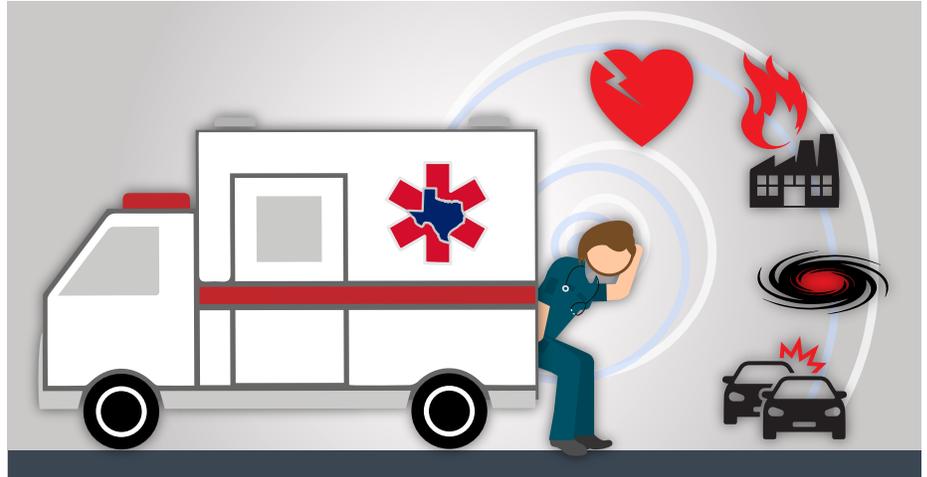
Texas EMS agencies are facing a workforce crisis. The pandemic has exacerbated an already critical health care workforce shortage related to EMS professionals. In particular, rural EMS agencies are facing the greatest workforce challenges.

EMS professionals are leaving the field at a higher rate than ever due to burnout, the risk of Covid-19 exposure and new career opportunities outside of traditional EMS that are able to offer higher salaries and other factors. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) recently released data indicating that only 27 percent of licensed Texas EMS professionals submitted a patient care report during the first eight months of 2021. Over 70 percent of eligible Texas EMS professionals did not work on an ambulance during the first eight months of 2021. To make a bad situation worse, Texas EMS agencies are not finding enough new EMS personnel to fill the vacancies.

WHY ARE EMS PROFESSIONALS LEAVING TEXAS EMS AGENCIES?

Factors contributing to the shortage include:

- Increased workload due to Covid-19 precautions and hospital overcrowding. This requires more staff to handle the same call volume.
- Personnel often find themselves required to isolate or quarantine due to on-the-job exposures on a frequent basis.
- High personnel Covid-19 infection rates, even among the vaccinated work force.
- Hospitals are hiring EMS personnel to help ease the nursing shortage.
- Other segments of the health care industry and industries are hiring EMS personnel. These include mobile IV companies, dialysis clinics, FEMA Covid-19 testing/vaccination clinics and oil and gas companies.
- Personnel are leaving the field out of fear of Covid-19 exposure to themselves and their families.
- Personnel are leaving the field due to burnout related to Covid-19 and the increased workload due to staffing shortages.
- Texas EMS agencies are facing a shortage of new EMS recruits entering the workforce.



WHY DOES TEXAS FACE A SHORTAGE OF NEW PERSONNEL ENTERING THE EMS WORKFORCE?

Factors contributing to a lack of new personnel entering the EMS workforce include:

- Individuals are reporting challenges in relation to accessing EMS education, and this is especially experienced in rural areas.
- Paramedic education schedules that do not accommodate shift work, which is common in EMS.
- Inadequate funding to support EMS education.
- The absence of a state-wide education and outreach effort directed at recruiting personnel to the EMS industry.



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HOW CAN THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE ADDRESS THE EMS WORKFORCE SHORTAGE?

While other areas of health care have seen relief in the form of state-supported staffing, Texas EMS agencies have rarely experienced similar relief. At this critical time, Texas EMS agencies must keep ambulances responding to 911 calls and supporting the health care infrastructure by moving critical patients from hospital to hospital.

The Texas Legislature can strengthen the EMS infrastructure in Texas by supporting efforts to bring more individuals into the EMS industry, and these initiatives include:

- Funding for a campaign to educate the Texas public about EMS careers, the high demand for EMS personnel and the opportunities for EMS education.
- Funding to support IT infrastructure to direct candidates to education programs and employment opportunities, as well as provide online information about the high demand for EMS professionals and explaining the education requirements.
- Funding to incentivize EMS education programs in rural and underserved areas to increase the number of EMS professionals.
- Funding within each regional advisory council (RAC) for an EMS workforce development position to promote and recruit EMS professionals into the field (with an emphasis on regional needs).
- Increasing access to EMS education through a distance learning program provided by an accredited college program. The funding would be used to acquire equipment and to support regional hands-on skills training sessions.
- Offering tuition repayment for EMS professionals in one of the following scenarios. 1) Working for an ambulance service for one year for as an EMT and two years as an advanced EMT. 2) Working as a paramedic in rural, frontier or medically underserved area after achieving certification.

COST BREAKDOWN

Statewide Career/Industry Awareness Campaign	\$1.5 million
IT Infrastructure Funding (Outsourced)	\$500,000
EMS Workforce Development Position in Each RAC	\$2.2 million
Education Program Incentives	\$5 million
Paramedic Distance Learning Program for 500	\$4 million
Additional Paramedic Courses for 500	\$4 million
Additional Advanced EMT Courses for 500	\$2.5 million
Additional EMT Courses for 1000	\$2 million
Total Expenditure	\$21.7 million

This funding will help ensure a strong EMS infrastructure in Texas. It is critical to do all that we can to ensure that when a Texan calls for help, dedicated, educated and prepared EMS professionals are ready to answer the call.

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