

MANAGE YOUR RISK

Ambulance Passenger Guidelines

Emergency Service Organizations (ESOs) continue to invest in the improvement of patient handling equipment to access and transport patients to a receiving facility. ESOs must also consider the issues associated with non-patient passengers. It is common that family members/guardians want to remain with a patient during transport; however, there are increased risks when allowing non-patient passengers to ride in the ambulance.

It is recommended that ESOs limit the number of passengers in the ambulance units as they can potentially interfere with the efforts of care providers. Additionally, passengers significantly increase the liability associated with the transport, especially in the event of an automotive accident.

VFIS recommends ESOs develop a written policy relating to non-patient passengers riding in department vehicles during medical transports. It is recommended that the policy address the following items.

Passenger Considerations

- Are they capable of caring for themselves?
- Will they create a driver distraction (e.g., emotional distress, attempting to interfere with care)?
- Are they able to get into and out of the vehicle without assistance?
- Are there alternative transportation options available?
- Are they intoxicated or under the influence of drugs or alcohol? If so, prohibit them from riding in the ambulance unit.

Passenger Seating

- Properly seat passengers in the front seat and enforce the use of seat belts.
- Discourage passengers from riding in the back of the ambulance.
- Do not allow child safety seats in the front seat for transporting children passengers.

Passenger Assistance (if necessary)

- Advise the passenger to wait for assistance in/out of the vehicle.
- Post a sign on the dashboard, also advising the passenger to wait for assistance entering/exiting the vehicle.
- If necessary, prohibit persons who need medical assistance entering/exiting the vehicle from being passengers.

DISCLAIMER: This is a sample guideline furnished to you by VFIS. Your organization should review this guideline and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization's needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm, or damage to personnel, property, and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your VFIS Risk Control Representative at (800) 233-1957.

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Alternative Transportation

VFIS recommends exhausting all alternative transportation options before allowing passengers. Consider the following methods when assisting potential passengers in arranging alternative transportation.

- Family
- Neighbors
- Law Enforcement
- Social Services
- Public transportation
- Private transportation (e.g., taxi, Uber)

Children

Only allow children to ride in the back of the ambulance if they are a patient. Secure infants and children patients utilizing manufacturer approved child securement devices designed for their size.

Parents/Guardians

Furthermore, it is recommended that parents/guardians of a pediatric patient do not ride in the back of the ambulance. Parents/guardians may interfere with caregiver attempts to provide care to their child. Additionally, if the child's condition deteriorates, the parent/guardian could become emotionally unstable and do more harm than good. If an emotionally stable parent/guardian wants to ride with their child to the medical facility, they may ride in the front seat, properly seated, and using a seat belt.

Summary

The ultimate goal of medical transport is to ensure the safe arrival of the patient and EMS crew to the receiving medical facility. Allowing passengers to accompany a patient during medical transport fits the altruistic nature of the ESO community; however, ESO's must understand the risks associated with this practice and address them in their policies and procedures.