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Position Statement: Medical Direction for Operational EMS Programs

Approved by the NAEMSP® Board of Directors 3/23/2010

The National Association of EMS Physicians® and the National Association of State EMS Officials believe that:

1. Operational EMS programs, and the providers that work within them, often function in remote or austere conditions that require specialized skills, and therefore specialized medical direction. These programs, or the environments in which they operate, may include, but are not limited to, ski patrols, wilderness search and rescue teams, urban search and rescue teams, fast or open water rescue teams, tactical EMS supporting law enforcement operations, fire-ground operations, and wild land fire crews.
2. Operational EMS programs should function within and not outside the mainstream healthcare system. Therefore, it is important that their constituent agencies and providers, regardless of the level of care provided or scope of practice, have a qualified medical director and that established standards of care are met.
3. An operational EMS medical director should have appropriate training, certification and licensure; expertise in EMS systems; and expertise in the specific type of operation. Ideally, the medical director should be a fully qualified member of the operational EMS team.
4. Operational EMS providers should function within their defined scopes of practice, as established by their training and certification or licensure as applicable within the state in which they are functioning.
5. Operational EMS organizations should ensure that the medical director is provided with mutually agreed upon compensation for services, availability and provision of necessary material and resources, and liability coverage for duties and actions performed.