

HOW TO BECOME AN EMT (EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN)

Emergency Medical Technicians (known as EMTs) are trained to provide emergency care, including ambulance services. Peoples' lives often depend on the quick reaction and competent care of EMTs. Incidents as varied as automobile accidents, heart attacks, drownings, childbirth, and gunshot wounds all require immediate medical attention. EMTs provide the vital attention as they care for and transport the sick and injured to a medical facility.

In an emergency, EMTs are typically dispatched to the scene by a 911 operator and often work with police and fire department personnel. Once they arrive, they determine the nature and extent of a patient's condition while trying to ascertain whether the patient has preexisting medical problems. Following strict rules and guidelines, they give appropriate emergency care and, when necessary, transport the patients.

At the medical facility, EMTs help transfer patients to the emergency department, report their observations and actions to emergency room staff, and provide additional medical treatment.

EMT Basic (also known as EMT I) represents the first component of the Emergency Medical Technician system. An EMT I is trained to care for patients at the scene of an accident while transporting patients by ambulance to the hospital under medical direction. An EMT I has the emergency skills to assess a patient's condition and manage respiratory, cardiac and trauma emergencies.

The EMT Intermediate (EMT II and III) have more advanced training that allows the administration of intravenous fluids, the use of manual defibrillators to give life-saving shocks to stopped hearts, and the applications of advanced airway techniques and equipment to assist patients experiencing respiratory emergency.

Working conditions: EMTs work both indoors and outdoors in all types of weather. They are required to do considerable kneeling, bending, and heavy lifting. Many people find the work of an EMT exciting and challenging and enjoy the opportunity to help others. EMTs employed by fire departments work 40-50 hours per week; those employed by hospitals frequently work between 40-60 hours per week; and those employed by private ambulance services work between 45-50 hours per week.

Training and other qualifications and advancement: Formal training and certification is needed to become an EMT. All 50 states have a certification procedure. To maintain certification, EMTs must register usually every 2 years. In order to register, an individual must be working as an EMT and meet continuing education requirements. Basic coursework typically emphasizes emergency skills such as managing respiratory trauma and cardiac emergency and patient assessment. Formal courses are often combined with time in an emergency room or ambulance. The program also provides for instruction and practice dealing with bleeding, fractures, airway obstruction, cardiac

arrest, and emergency childbirth. Students learn how to use and maintain common emergency equipment such as backboards, suction devices, splints, oxygen delivery systems, and stretchers. Graduates of an approved EMT training program who pass a written and practical examination administered by the state certifying them with the title of Registered EMT Basic. This course is also a prerequisite for EMT Intermediate and EMT Paramedic Training.

EMT Intermediate training requirements vary from state to state. Training commonly includes 35-55 hours of additional instruction beyond EMT Basic coursework.

Job opportunities: Employment needs for EMT is expected to grow faster than the average of all other occupations through 2012. Population growth and urbanization will increase the demand for full-time paid EMTs, rather than for volunteers in a department. In addition, a large segment of the population – the aging baby boomers – will further spur the demand for EMT services as they become more likely to have medical emergencies.

Opportunities for individuals will be best for those who have advanced certification such as EMT Intermediate and EMT Paramedic as clients and patients demand higher levels of care before arriving at the hospital.

Where can you find training to become an EMT? Almost all community colleges and some state colleges and hospitals offer training for Emergency Medical Technicians. This is usually a 3-month course that can be completed as part of other curriculum at a college.

For those of you interested in becoming a paramedic, please review the link, “How to Become a Paramedic.”