

What is EMS?

Emergency Medical Services, or EMS, is more than a transport service for patients – it is a critical clinical service. In an emergency situation, treatment begins as soon as the EMS team arrives and continues until the patient can be cared for in a medical facility.

How does EMS transport patients?

No matter where an emergency happens in Alberta, AHS EMS can transport patients by either a ground ambulance or air ambulance – fixed wing airplane or helicopter. Being one provincial organization means we have the knowledge and resources to send the right resource, to the right patient, at the right time.

Does AHS EMS provide ambulance service in all communities in Alberta?

EMS has stations in 151 communities in Alberta. AHS provides EMS services in the majority of communities but also has contracts with other EMS providers to provide service to all communities in the province 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

What happens when I dial 911?

All medical 911 emergency calls are answered by an EMS dispatch centre. They receive calls and dispatch services for about 400,000 events a year and have the expertise and

- The first thing the call taker will do is ask you to confirm the address of the call and your phone number.
- Once the address is verified an ambulance will be sent.
- While the ambulance is on its way, the call taker will stay on the line to get as much information as possible about the patient, their condition and what happened.
- The call taker will provide you with instructions to assist the patient and prepare for the ambulance to arrive.
- Depending on the nature of the emergency, the call taker may stay on the line with you until help arrives.

How many ambulances are there in Alberta?

There are 550 ambulances throughout the province, including 278 owned and operated by AHS. We're constantly modernizing the fleet and ensuring vehicles are safe and able to provide the highest quality of care. About 155 vehicles have been replaced over the past three years. Upgrading to advanced cardiac monitors/defibrillators across the province is expected to be complete in 2013.

How many EMS stations are there in Alberta?

There are 204 stations across the province dispatching AHS and contracted ambulances. They are strategically spread out so that no matter where you live, help is close to hand.

How many airplanes are available for transporting patients?

There are 12 contracted fixed-wing air ambulances around the province that can be used to transport patients. In the past year they were used to transfer 8,500 patients – that's 23 patients every day. AHS also has an affiliation agreement with Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) to ensure rotary air ambulance (helicopter) service is provided from bases in Calgary, Edmonton and Grande Prairie.

What qualifications and training to EMS staff have to do their jobs?

EMS personnel provide vital out-of-hospital emergency care. There are three levels of EMS Practitioners providing services in Alberta:

- Emergency Medical Responder (EMR)
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
- Emergency Medical Technologist Paramedic (EMT-P)

EMS practitioners have different levels for training depending on their position. EMRs have a basic level of training while EMTs have more comprehensive training including an eight month certificate program. Paramedics require two years of advanced training and practicum before they are certified to work.

More information about these health care professionals can be found at:

<http://www.collegeofparamedics.org/>

What is the difference between Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances?

BLS ambulances are staffed with Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) or Emergency Medical Responders (EMR) with a standard level of equipment to provide essential medical care for patients. Personnel have 100 to 400 hours of formal education. They provide basic patient assessment and treatment including obtaining vital signs, administering oxygen and splinting extremities.

ALS ambulances are able to respond to more complex medical situations with a staff of at least one paramedic with expanded training and scope of practice and more life saving equipment on board. Personnel have a 2 year college diploma and are trained in all the skills of EMR's and EMT's (BLS) but also have training in treatment including advanced airway management and medication administration.

How can I work for EMS?

We're always looking for keen, qualified candidates to join AHS EMS. Visit the AHS Career page to see if you've got what it takes, and search for jobs.

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/careers-page-12.asp>