



Health Career Directory

Emergency Medical Assistant (Ambulance Paramedic)

Overview

This occupational group includes ambulance attendants more commonly known as paramedics. This group also includes other paramedical workers, such as "first aid attendants" and "first responders". "First aid attendants" are designated by employers to provide first aid to workers at workplaces. "First responders" are police, fire department, and search and rescue personnel who have been trained to assist patients prior to arrival of an ambulance crew. They administer pre-hospital emergency medical care to patients with injuries or medical illnesses.

They also transport patients to hospitals or other medical facilities for further medical care. There are several levels of EMAs: from Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) - to Critical Care Paramedic (CCP). In BC, they are mainly hired by the BC Ambulance Service. However, some of these workers work in industrial, hospital and other settings.

EMAs transport patients by air, land or water to hospitals or other medical facilities for further medical care. They also document and record the nature of injuries and illnesses and the treatment they have provided. In addition, they assist hospital personnel with the provision of medical treatment, if necessary. As well, these workers maintain ambulances and emergency care equipment and supplies. EMAs may also train and supervise other workers in this occupational group.

Main roles and responsibilities

EMAs usually have a higher or more specialized level of training than first aid attendants. The main duties for these occupations are described below.

Emergency Medical Assistants EMAs perform, or assist with, triage of emergency patients. In order to determine emergency medical treatment, they assess the extent of injuries or medical illnesses of:

- trauma victims
- patients with respiratory disease
- patients suffering from stress
- patients who have overdosed
- patients who have been poisoned
- industrial accident victims; and
- other ill or injured individuals.

These workers also administer pre-hospital emergency care to patients such as:

- oxygen therapy
- cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- spinal immobilization
- bandaging; and
- splinting.

EMAs establish, maintain, administer, or provide:

- intravenous treatment (IV)
- adjunctive equipment for ventilation and circulation complications
- medications; and
- other advanced emergency treatment to patients.

First Aid Attendants

First aid attendants care for those who are hurt or who become sick at the workplace. They evaluate the seriousness of the situation and determine if and what treatment is needed.

In cases which require medical care, the first aid attendant will provide treatment until medical treatment is delivered. They will maintain the patient, and minimize the consequences of the injury until medical treatment arrives. First aid attendants also treat minor injuries that would otherwise not receive, or that do not require, medical treatment.

These workers may clean and bandage wounds and give oxygen. They may keep air passages clear in cases of choking. They also make sure the patient does not move in cases of spine or head injuries, and they keep the patient warm and comfortable. First aid attendants also keep records of the incident.

Who is suited to become emergency medical assistant?

Emergency medical personnel are most effective when they have the following skills and characteristics:

- excellent oral and written communication skills
- strong leadership abilities
- sound decision making skills
- a strong desire to help those in need
- the ability to remain firm, reassuring, and efficient in moments of crisis; and
- the ability to work independently, and as part of a team.

Paramedics also need to be quick with their hands so that they can administer advanced pre-hospital emergency care.

All emergency medical personnel should be skilled at putting together information to assess injuries and illness. They should also understand clear rules and have organized methods for administering pre-hospital care, and for operating medical equipment.

Who employs emergency medical assistants?

Paramedics primarily work for the BC Ambulance Service. Full-time paramedics work assigned shifts. Part-time paramedics work on call, depending on need, scheduling and availability. Other paramedical workers, such as first aid attendants, are employed by a variety of other industries,

including construction. They may work for private industrial ambulance services, in schools, manufacturing firms or industrial sites.

Work in this occupational group occurs throughout the province. However, the majority of work opportunities are in the Lower Mainland, Southwest Vancouver Island, and Coastal regions. This is likely due to the fact that these areas contain larger urban centres, and therefore require more workers in this occupation.

Some Emergency Medical Assistants work in hospitals and in industrial settings, such as oilfields. These workers work assigned shifts and may be required to work weekends and holidays.

Paramedics work both indoors and outdoors. The work is very physically difficult, because they often spend a great deal of time standing, kneeling, bending and lifting patients into stretchers.

For many first aid attendants providing first aid is not their primary responsibility, but is combined with the other duties and responsibilities of their jobs. Therefore, this occupation is not always a full-time job..

First aid attendants who work full-time in high-risk workplaces and those who drive industrial ambulances may be required to work weekends and holidays. Some full-time first aid attendants may be employed seasonally by industries that operate outdoors.

Other paramedical workers work for private ambulance services, hospitals, fire departments, government departments and agencies, manufacturing firms, industrial sites and other private-sector establishments.

Workers in this occupational group may be exposed to contagious or potentially dangerous diseases. As a result, preventive measures are undertaken to reduce these risks.

This work can be physically demanding and emotionally stressful. However, many find these occupations to be both challenging and rewarding.

Salary

Hourly Range - \$22.31 - \$33.37

Required Training and Education to Become Ambulance Paramedics

Employment requirements for workers in this occupational group vary based on the occupation and the employer.

There are four different levels within the EMA occupation nationally, relating to the level of training a worker has acquired:

- Emergency Medical Responder
- Primary Care Paramedic
- Advanced Care Paramedic
- Critical Care Paramedic.

In BC, there are five practitioner levels within the EMA occupation:

- Emergency Medical Responder
- Primary Care Paramedic
- Advanced Care Paramedic

- Critical Care Paramedic
- Infant Transport Team.

Critical care paramedics and the Infant transport team paramedics are specialized teams within the BC Ambulance Service.

Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) requires a 105-hour entry-level training program in emergency patient care and transportation.

Primary Care Paramedic (PCP) requires a six-month (including practicum) certificate program.

Advanced Care Paramedics (ACP) must complete an 18-month diploma program.

Critical Care Paramedic (CCP) and Infant Transport Team (ITT) are the highest levels of paramedic certification within BC. The CCP program training in BC is currently only accessible to advanced care paramedics.

The prerequisite for Infant Transport Team training is PCP certification plus clinical experience.

All levels of EMAs are governed by the Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board. In order to be licensed in the province, graduates with certificates from a recognized training agency must complete the appropriate licensing requirements. These licensing requirements include a practical evaluation and, where applicable, a written exam.

Paramedics (PCPs and ACPs) and Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) work for the BC Ambulance Service, which is the sole provider of pre-hospital emergency health care for the province. The BC Ambulance Service requires completion of Grade 12 or equivalent, EMR licence or comparable qualification, and CPR Level "C" certificate. Preference is given to applicants who hold a minimum Primary Care Paramedic licence or equivalent.

Applicants for EMA positions of all levels must have a Class 1, 2 or 4 BC driver's licence. The BC Ambulance Service prefers a Class 4 unrestricted licence. Candidates should also have a driving record that demonstrates safe and capable driving skills. In addition, they must pass a physical abilities test and a comprehensive criminal records review.

First aid attendants working in industrial or other settings must hold a valid certificate of

Occupational First Aid (Level 1, 2 or 3) issued by WorkSafeBC (formerly the Workers' Compensation Board of BC) or the equivalent. Occupational first aid courses recognized by WorkSafeBC range in length from 8 hours to 70 hours. They include a Transportation Endorsement for Level 1 and 2 Occupational First Aid attendants. Graduates must pass written, oral and practical examinations. WorkSafeBC recognizes an EMR licence as meeting Occupational First Aid Level 3 requirements in the workplace.

Workers already licensed or certified in another province or territory in a provincially regulated occupation will have their credentials recognized in BC. For more detailed information, contact the provincial regulator.

Career Advancement

In Canada, the highest level of certification paramedics can pursue through advanced training is the critical care paramedic (CCP). Some paramedics may also choose to pursue careers in other emergency services or health care fields by completing additional training. With further training and considerable work experience, workers in this occupational group may be able to work as supervisors, operations managers or senior administrators. Other related careers include dispatcher, instructor, and salesperson of emergency medical equipment.

First aid attendants with Occupational First Aid Level 3 qualification may take an Occupational First Aid to Emergency Medical Responder (OFA-EMR) bridging course to qualify to apply for EMR licensing in BC. First aid attendants may also choose to pursue a career in occupational health and safety.

Resources

Education Programs

Academy of Emergency Training

<http://www.firstaid.ca>

First aid attendant training WorkSafeBC

<http://www2.worksafebc.com/Topics/FirstAid/Home.asp>

Emergency Medical Assistants Licensing Board

<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ema/>

Justice Institute of BC

<http://www.jibc.ca/programs-courses/schools-departments/school-health-sciences/paramedic-academy>

Financial assistance and bursaries

For information about Canada student loans and grants, please visit:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/student/loans_grants/index.shtml

Associations

Ambulance Paramedics of British Columbia

<http://www.apbc.ca/>

BC Ambulance Service

<http://www.bcas.ca/>

Paramedic Association of Canada

<http://paramedic.ca/>