

Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS) Cymru

OPERATIONAL STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Safety at Scene

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Author(s)	Alastair Newton, John Glen
Internal reviewer(s)	Dindi Gill
Sign off	Operational Reference Group

Introduction & Objectives

Working within the pre-hospital environment poses a number of hazards and risks to staff. Safety at scene is paramount and the responsibility of all staff. It is important never to assume a scene is safe until you have personally assessed it. It is also vital that the appropriate PPE is worn not only to protect but also identify all personnel at an incident.

The purpose of this SOP is:

1. To highlight the hazards associated with pre-hospital work.
2. To provide guidelines for working safely in the pre-hospital environment and minimising risk both generally and in specific situations.
3. To provide information on the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

General safety considerations

1. Scene safety is a dynamic process and requires continuous evaluation.
2. Think in terms of self, team, patient and scene.
3. Initial assessment of scene safety may be best done from air prior to landing (e.g. is traffic flow stopped?).
4. First ask: Is the scene safe to approach? **STOP** and take 10 seconds to assess the scene to identify hazards, actual or potential, before approaching.
5. Routinely discuss initial evaluation of scene safety as a team prior to entering the scene – only enter if you are all agreed that it is safe.
6. If the scene is not safe what needs to be done to make it safe?
7. You must be wearing appropriate PPE for the situation. You will not be allowed on scene otherwise. Using a buddy check system is a useful method of ensuring all team members are wearing appropriate PPE.
8. Before approaching a casualty liaise with other services on scene regarding safety.

1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The following PPE should be worn for all prehospital incidents:-

1. Flame retardant flight suit.
2. High visibility vests/jackets (with appropriate signage stating role).
3. Steel toe-capped boots.
4. Protective helmets (with appropriate signage stating role).
5. Goggles (unless helmet has an appropriate visor).
6. Rescue gloves.

The following should be considered if the fire service is using cutting equipment or heavy machinery:-

1. Ear plugs.
2. Dust masks.

All faulty/damaged PPE should be reported immediately using the standard reporting system.

Specific safety considerations

1. Road Traffic Accidents

- Liaise with both police and fire services regarding scene safety.
- Liaise with police regarding traffic and cordons:
 - Ideally traffic should be stopped in both directions but this may not always happen especially on motorways.
 - Police can often be reluctant to stop traffic to prevent congestion.

- Liaise with fire service regarding vehicular aspects of scene safety including:

Fire

- Fuel and fluids covered in sand.
- Electricity – ignition turned off, key removed & battery disconnected.
- LPG vehicles – have large gas cylinders in rear.

Movement of car

- Handbrake on.
- Vehicle stabilised with blocks, chocks and straps.

Vehicle Hazards

- Airbag devices (restraints applied).
- Seatbelt pre-tensioners.

Sharp glass and metal edges.

Cutting equipment and leads (e.g. hydraulic / electric).

- Helmets and visors/goggles as well as rescue gloves should be worn when in and around vehicles especially during extrication. These should always be carried on EMRTS vehicles and carried to ALL road traffic accidents.
- Dust masks should be worn whenever cutting equipment is being utilised.
- Remember cutting gear doesn't differentiate between flesh and metal!

2. Industrial/Agricultural incidents

- Liaise with the fire service regarding the stability of hazards such as masonry or scaffolding.
- Do not work at height if you feel it is unsafe to do so, ideally only work at height if you have an appropriate harness.
- Don't forget head and eye protection.
- Be vigilant at all times to the possibility of falling rubble.
- Ensure machinery is turned off and/or disconnected before treating a casualty.

3. Railway incidents ('one unders')

- Liaise with rail staff and the fire service on arrival.
- Prior to going onto the tracks you must personally ensure that:
 - All train movements are stopped.
 - Track electricity is turned off and short circuit devices are applied where available.

4. Electrical incidents

- Ensure that the electrical supply is switched off before approaching the scene – this should be confirmed visually by a member of the team.
- Consider the presence of conduction media (e.g. water).

- Nominate someone e.g. a police officer to stand duty at the switch mechanism to prevent power being restored inadvertently.

5. Shootings and Stabbings

- A cordon will be established by the police around the scene.
- The police may have established a rendezvous point (RVP) distant from the incident sight in firearms incidents.
- NEVER approach a casualty until the police have confirmed that the scene is secure.
- If you feel that the scene is not safe at any point you should leave immediately and inform the police.

6. Chemical incidents

- Do not become contaminated by accident – always consider a chemical/radiation risk.
- Obtain as much information as possible regarding the chemical(s) before approaching the scene.
- An ESTABLISHED chemical incident will be split into 3 zones.
 - Hot – contaminated area.
 - Warm – decontamination area (tents, showers etc).
 - Cold – clean area.
- Establish the hot zone from the fire officer in charge – if none established consult with senior fire/ambulance officers to do this.
- Do not approach until certain it is safe to do so and the chemicals have been adequately identified and, where necessary, “made safe.”
- Casualties should preferably be decontaminated at the incident site – by WAST/HART.
- Only very basic medical care is possible in a decontamination suit.
- Advanced medical care can only be instituted once:
 - Patient has been decontaminated / is in the cold zone.
 - It is confirmed that the chemicals are in fact harmless (NEVER assume this).
- Is specific information on the chemical(s) available? (HAZCHEM boards etc.).
- If bringing a patient back to hospital double check that they have been properly decontaminated. Do not contaminate an entire hospital.

7. Terrorist Incidents

- Always consider the possibility of a terrorist incident.
- These incidents are extremely dangerous due to:
 - Possible hazardous material contamination.
 - Secondary incidents/devices.

- If possible:

Do not enter the area.

Voice your concerns to the senior incident officers (PIO, FIO & AIO).

Do not use radios/mobiles phones (may act as trigger for secondary devices)/

References and Further Reading

EMRS (Scotland) Standard Operating Procedure: Safety at Scene.