

Texas EMS Trauma News

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Heat Emergencies

By Mark E. Escott, MD, MPH, FACEP, FAEMS, NRP, Medical Director, City of Austin-Travis County EMS

As our temperatures and humidity climb in Texas, heat related emergencies pose a significant risk of morbidity and mortality for our first responders and for our patients. On average, close to 100 deaths are reported annually from heat related emergencies with 66% occurring in those over the age of 50. While we are all familiar with heat cramps, exhaustion, and stroke, it is important to remember that heat stroke may be the initial presentation of a heat emergency without warning. Therefore, the best management for our patients and workforce is PREVENTION!

While all of us in Texas are used to the heat, we may not be acclimatized to prolonged periods of time in hot environments, particularly if you have only brief episodes of exposure to the elements. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), acclimatization to the heat for folks who are working in heat stress conditions are recommended to occur over 4-5 days depending on your prior experience under similar conditions.

As you can appreciate, if you are working a 24 on 24 off schedule, it may be very challenging to get yourself acclimatized to this heat. You may get by most days if you are in and out of the AC, but it may only take one extended extrication or standby on a structure fire to turn you into the casualty. Therefore, you may consider spending some time outdoors on your days off exerting yourself in the heat so that you can perform without the worry of becoming a victim yourself on a call.

There are a number of other things that you can do to help prepare for this sweltering heat and humidity and prevent heat stress. One of those is adjusting your fluid intake. Depending on your work environment, clothing, and protective gear, you may lose 1-4 L per

hour in sweat. Therefore, adequate hydration before and during work is critical. Checking your urine color is an effective way to monitor your fluid status that is used across the world for the prevention of dehydration and heat emergencies. As a general rule, your urine should be clear or nearly

clear. The darker it is, the more concentrated it is which means drink up! Remember that when you sweat, you are primarily losing free water, so replacement with water is fine in most cases. It is also advisable to mix in some commercial electrolyte drinks, particularly if you are not getting enough salt in the form of regular meals.

There are some drinks to avoid which may contribute to heat emergencies. Alcohol and caffeinated beverages will cause diuresis. Therefore, in addition to the sweating, your body will push additional water out in the form of urine, even if you are dehydrated. Drinks with excessive sugar, including fruit juices, will draw additional fluid into the GI tract and may contribute to diarrhea as well as decreased intravascular fluid as your body tries to dilute the sugar load.

Prevention also means advocacy for the vulnerable population in our communities. In particular, our homeless, our elderly, and our poor. These individuals may not have access to basic nutrition to maintain their electrolytes or sufficient clean water to drink to maintain their hydration. They may also not have air conditioning or may have impaired thermoregulation due to disease or substance abuse. It is important to make note of these factors and communicate them to the hospital on transfer as well as notification of APS or CPS when these factors place them at significant risk.

For more information on First Responder prevention and protection as well as clinical pearls, please see our [ATCOMD Heat Emergencies podcast](#).

For more information on general workforce protection visit [OSHA's heat safety page](#).

Texas Shines

Teachable Moments: EMT brings CPR training to Buda Dog Race

Photo by Joseph Schmider

Our very own State EMS Director and proud wiener dog owner, Joe Schmider, submitted the inaugural entry to the Texas Shines feature of the newsletter. In May, he was attending the Buda Weiner Dog Races with the pups, Izzy and Cooper, when he came across Lt Abel Gonzales from the Buda FD/EMS teaching hands only CPR to the public. As people walked by he asked if they knew CPR and groups formed to take a moment to learn these lifesaving skills. Thank you Lt. Gonzales for going the extra mile and creating a great public teaching moment.

[Celina firefighter recognized for heroic efforts on Southwest plane accident](#)
Story reposted with permission from KXII News, Texoma, Rachel Knapp reporting

Congressman John Ratcliffe paid a visit to the Celina Fire Department Friday morning to award Andrew Needum an award he said only seven Texans have received. "We are grateful for what you did and we are grateful for the person who you are," the Congressman said to Needum.

Needum was recognized with the Lone Star Award for his heroic efforts to save the life of New Mexico mother, Jennifer Riordan. She was hit by shrapnel that broke a window on a Southwest plane in April when the plane's engine failed. Witnesses said Needum jumped into action, pulling her from the window and performing CPR. But Riordan's injuries were too severe and she died at a hospital. "There were many people on that plane that stood up and acted," Needum said. "It's a humbling experience to be here before you today." [Read more](#)

[New staff joins EMS Trauma System Section](#)

Jorge Alvarez joins the EMS/Trauma System Section as our newest EMS Specialist to the South Group – Harlingen office. Jorge has been certified since 1988 and is currently an AEMT. Mr. Alvarez started the City of Mathis EMS service in the early 90's and has since moved on to EMS Director positions with City of Beeville EMS, City of Taft EMS and most recently Angel Care Ambulance Service. Jorge has also been teaching EMS courses for over 20 years and became a DSHS Basic Coordinator in 2016.

[Questions about Service Animals and the ADA](#)

Recently, our office has received questions on how to best handle the presence of service animals when transporting patients.

The Department of Justice provides answers to frequently asked questions on ADA and service animal accommodations, which should help.

https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.pdf

[Where do I find it?](#)

Data Breaches

What should I do if my entity's data was breached and I suspect personal health information may have been compromised?

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights, entities are obligated by law (45 C.F.R. § 164.408) to report suspected breaches to the Secretary within 60 days of the end of the calendar year in which the breach was discovered. For more information about EMS data breach reporting, visit <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/breach-notification/breach-reporting/index.html>

[American sign language \(ASL\) resources for medical personnel](#)

Emergency and medical personnel may sometimes be in a situation where they are treating someone in the deaf community. You always want to provide the highest level of care and an ASL interpreter may not always be immediately on scene. Here are some resources to help you learn simple sign language medical terms and communication skills to more effectively understand your patient's needs until an interpreter becomes available.

Note: It is a good idea to learn the signs for numbers and the alphabet, as these can assist in signing common medical abbreviations,

i.e. CPR, ER, IV, as well as the names of medications.

Printable

[Basic Medical Sign Language California Department of Social Services Office of Deaf Access](#)

Videos:

Top ASL Signs for Medical Emergencies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6b-rHvJPrLE>

15 Signed Phrases for Emergency Medical Questions in American Sign Language <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaWE6cFl8ac>

First Responder Communication with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Citizens

<https://frdat.niagara.edu/support-resources/tools-and-resources/american-sign-language/>

Staff Changes- Austin Central Office

Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has made changes in EMS so that the EMS/ Trauma System office align with other sections at DSHS. Brett Hart is leading the EMS Policy, Standards, and Quality Assurance Group (PSQA) for EMS/Trauma System and as a result his duties have change. The primary role of the EMS PSQA unit is to provide separation between the investigation survey findings documented by the EMS program staff and the potential of an adverse action by DSHS related to cited deficiencies. The EMS PSQA group will work closely with the EMS Program. Please continue to contact the following personnel as needed:

Daniel Williams provides guidance concerning education applications and issues. As needed, he will also support local EMS /FRO providers, conduct inspections, surveys, site-visits and investigations.

Chris Meyer conducts inspections, surveys, site-visits and investigations with support from Daniel

Heather Godinez and Keli Rockett conduct criminal history background review.

Holly Covert is the Central Groups Administrative Assistant and can help guide you to the correct person as needed.

Joe Schmider, State EMS Director, will be leading the central group and will continue to be an available resource to our EMS stakeholders.

Please congratulate Brett on this new position and thank him for his years of service as the Central Group Manager. We wish him the best of luck in his new role within DSHS!

Medical Director requirements for first responder organizations (FRO)

View infographic

<http://www.dshs.texas.gov/emstraumasystems/EMS/pdf/FRO-MDAgreement-FlowChart.pdf>

Stakeholder meetings scheduled regarding trauma and stroke facility designation rule revisions

The Department of State Health Services will be holding stakeholder meetings across the State to discuss rule revisions pertaining to Texas Administrative Code §157.125 Requirements for Trauma Facility Designation and §157.133 Requirements for Stroke Facility Designation.

Trauma Rules Stakeholder Meetings:

Lubbock

Monday, July 23, 2018; 9 AM - 4 PM
Covenant Medical Center

Knipling Education & Conference Center

Located inside West Parking Garage (6th floor)

Garage access code: 9136#

21st Street and Louisville Avenue

Lubbock, Texas 79410

Amarillo

Wednesday, July 25, 2018; 9 AM - 4 PM
Amarillo College West Campus, Lecture Hall
6222 SW 9th Ave
Amarillo, TX 79106

Temple

Thursday, August 2, 2018; 9 AM - 4 PM
Scott & White Medical Center - Temple
TAMU Room 109
2401 S. 31st St
Temple, TX 76508

[Stroke Rules Stakeholder Meetings:](#)

Amarillo

Tuesday, July 24, 2018; 12 PM - 4 PM
Amarillo College West Campus, Lecture Hall
6222 SW 9th Ave
Amarillo, TX 79106

Lubbock

Thursday, July 26, 2018; 9 AM - 12 PM
Covenant Children's Hospital, Arnett Room
4002 24th Street
Lubbock, TX 79410

Temple

Friday, August 3, 2018; 9 AM - 12 PM
Scott & White Medical Center - Temple
TAMU Room 109
2401 S. 31st St
Temple, TX 76508

Additional meetings will be scheduled in other areas of Texas in September and October. Resource documents for these meetings are available at: www.dshs.texas.gov/emstraumasystems/drafrules.aspx.

NEWS FROM THE WEB

External links to other sites are intended to be informational and do not have the endorsement of the Texas Department of State Health Services. These sites may also not be accessible to persons with disabilities.

FEATURED ARTICLES

New Guidelines for Teaching Mass Casualty Incident Triage Support Unified Emergency Response EMS.gov

<https://www.ems.gov/newsletter/may2018/New-MCI-Triage-Instructional-Guidelines.html>

U.S. DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Urges Motorists to Have a Safe Summer

NHTSA <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/us-dots-national-highway-traffic-safety-administration-urges-motorists-have-safe>

ADDITIONAL READING

NHTSA's EMS Update:

<https://www.ems.gov/ems-update.html>

Homes for Texas Heroes Home Loan Program:

www.tsahc.org/homeownership/loans-down-payment-assistance

The program, spearheaded by the Texas legislature, provides a 30-year fixed rate home loan to Texas EMS personnel, firefighters, peace officers and others. In addition, this program offers down payment and closing cost assistance of up to 5% of the mortgage loan amount, in the form of a grant.

Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons:

<http://bulletin.facs.org/>

The Bulletin of the American College of Surgeons is published monthly by the American College of Surgeons.

Washington Update: <http://www.nasemso.org/WashingtonUpdate/>

The Washington Update is produced bi-monthly by the National Association of State EMS Officials in cooperation with NHTSA OEMS, with funds also provided by HHS EMSC.

NACo County News:

<http://www.naco.org/news>

The voice of American counties.

The Pony Express:

<https://www.bcm.edu/departments/pediatrics/texasemsc/?pmid=15790>

Official Newsletter of the EMSC State Partnership, Texas.

Integrated Healthcare Delivery:

<https://www.emsworld.com/article/11294452/integrated-future>

Integrated Healthcare Delivery focuses on improving the patient experience of care through inter-professional collaborations.

Questions, comments or suggestions about Texas EMS Trauma News?

Contact us at EMSTraumaNews@dshs.state.tx.us.