Ambulance Safety Resources

There seems to be more interest in ambulance crash safety recently. It is the topic of an upcoming webinar next week by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), and the Department of Homeland Security’s Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) released two ambulance safety resources, all with the goal of saving the lives of both patients and providers.

The NHTSA found the “fatality rate of EMS professionals is three times greater than the average in any other occupation,” a troubling statistic. Some evidence shows that first responders cut corners in a rush to help their patients. Other evidence supports the need for safer and better-engineered ambulances.

S&T’s reports discuss both these things and provide many suggestions for change and improvement in both practice and design. “Ambulance Patient Compartment Human Factors Design Guidebook” (PDF, 2.15 Mb) offers guidelines and best practices that can be used by EMS organizations and manufacturers when designing patient compartments.

“A Research Study of Ambulance Operations and Best Practice Considerations for Emergency Medical Services Personnel” (PDF, 1.29 Mb) examines the behavior of the ambulance drivers. It covers defensive driving, use of technology, intersection handling, keeping a good driving record, and different types of training.

(Source: DHS S&T)

School Security Measures May Hinder Fire Safety

As schools try to bolster security measures over school shootings and other school-related violence concerns, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) seek to remind everyone that meshing school security with fire and life safety is not always as straightforward as we would hope.

Codes and standards such as NFPA 101 Life Safety Code have several specific requirements for door locks to enable egress during fires or other emergencies. Classroom doors are a concern here: enabling students to remain safely locked in a classroom while keeping an assailant locked out will leave first responders, such as law enforcement or EMS, locked out as well.

NFPA held a workshop in December to discuss this potential problem, and the report
from that event is expected out in May. Two NFPA Technical Committees will discuss
the problem this summer at their meetings, and keep an eye on the NFPA Journal for a
focus article on the topic as well. NFPA requests input on this and other issues affecting
life safety before July 6th.

In the meantime, fire, EMS, and law enforcement departments are encouraged to open
a dialog with their local school districts, colleges, and universities to ensure any security
measures they may have enacted comply with current fire and life safety codes.

(Source: NFPA)

Hacktivist Threat: Law Enforcement, Public Officials

The FBI this week released a Public Service Announcement warning law enforcement
personnel and public officials that they are at an increased risk of being targeted in
cyberattacks. They are reminding officers and public officials to be aware of their online
presence and that of their families.

The concern here is doxing, collecting a person’s personal information from social
media sites, personal websites, newspapers, and the websites of a person’s employer.
Information like names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and even pass-
words are posted online with information describing why the person should be a target
of a cyberattack.

The FBI’s announcement lists several ways to limit your online exposure, including
being mindful of online commenting, checking the security of your home networks, rou-
tinely updating antivirus software, and monitoring credit and banking activity. We have
written about protecting your online presence (PDF, 283 Kb) before, specifically about
security methods for various social media sites. The U.S. Computer Emergency Readi-
ness Team (US-CERT) also lists security tips for staying safe online.

(Source: FBI)

2015 Spring Flooding Outlook, Infrastructure Threat

The Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Cyber and Infrastructure Analysis
(OCIA) released the “2015 Spring Flooding Outlook and Potential Impacts to Critical In-
frastucture” (PDF, 1.17 Mb) this week. In it, they outline the expected risk by region and
assess the impact the floods may have on the nation’s critical infrastructure sectors.

This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts there
are “no widespread areas at risk for exceeding major flood levels for 2015” based on
frost depth, snowpack, temperatures, and various other variables. Areas expected
to have some flooding include New England and western New York; the Ohio Valley,
Tennessee, and Cumberland Valley; the lower Missouri and Ohio Basins; the Southern
Plains; and Southeastern United States.

The OCIA risk analysis states the greatest infrastructure impact would be to the Trans-
portation Systems, Energy, Dams, Water and Wastewater, Food and Agriculture, and
Chemical Sectors. Preparation and restoration practices are discussed for other infra-
structure to include the Emergency Services Sector.

(Source: OCIA)