

EMS STAFF SAFETY NEWSLETTER

MAAS Fund Newsletter for Field Staff

APRIL 2015

SELFISH MOTIVATION & THE PROFESSIONAL MEDIC

What is “Selfish Motivation”? It may be just about the only thing that could keep you safe while doing your job. The EMS industry has invested countless hours of research on learning proper patient care and treatment, handling of various diseases and traumatic life threatening injuries, and proper defensive driving techniques. One subject that is nearly impossible to teach, is how a person should think. However, how a person thinks can be the difference between life and death. Let’s take a few moments to discuss the benefits of Selfish Motivation. It is the concept of self preservation whereby you are the first priority. Here are four fundamental principles:

Is the Scene Safe for YOU?

Since every treatment or transport scene is different, different conditions apply, such as snow, rain, traffic, uneven surfaces, stairs, narrow doorways, heavy patients, and the list goes on. Assessing the scene from the perspective of what can happen to YOU while doing YOUR job is the key to your survival and ability to remain injury free. From the moment you enter the rig until that arrival at the scene, think about what obstacles and hazards you might face when you arrive. Just as you take time to assess the patient’s situation and treatment options, YOU must also take the time to immediately assess the conditions and circumstances of the scene for YOUR safety. With practice, this can become just as much a habit as your skill in assessing the patients needs.

Are YOU prepared for all scene hazards?

Do you have and know how to use the proper equipment that comes with your rig. Example, when you are working a roadside scene, do you AUTOMATICALLY put on your reflectorized vest? Do you automatically glove and mask? Do you automatically wear your grip shoes or boots in all situations? Do you automatically put on your safety goggles where there are possible bodily fluids that are present?

Safety is not something extra; it is a part of your job. In fact, it can save your life.



Educate YOURSELF to become an Expert

Use “Selfish Motivation” to protect yourself. Just as you are an expert in pre-hospital patient care, become an expert in determining what hazards are present in every phase and function of your chosen occupation. More importantly, become an expert in how to spot those hazards instantly and how to handle those hazards in order to avoid injury to YOU.

The reality of things: Keep in mind that when you use the “Selfish Motivation” strategy, in the long run your partner and patient benefit also.

Your entire future in EMS depends on how well you take care of yourself first. If you negatively impact your own health and well-being with an injury, then how will you be of help to the patients that need lifesaving care.

Remember, all injuries are preventable, and safety is about being Proactive, not reactive. Be the professional you know that you are.

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EMS Professional to Safety Expert

In our society, it is more and more commonplace to see obese patients who need assistance. We recognize that time is precious and sometimes personal pride enters into the picture, but your safety is first priority.

As your own safety expert, here are some general rules to keep first and foremost in your mind:

- 1** Even if you have protocols for weight limits, if you do not feel comfortable with the size of the patient - call for backup.
- 2** Prior to moving the patient, ensure that all equipment necessary to perform the function is in pre-staged & ready.
- 3** During the movement process, ensure that your body position is correct. Do not place your lower back or shoulders at risk of a strain injury.

YOUR Safety in EMS -- Is YOUR future in EMS

Since one of the most dangerous parts for the EMS provider involves the lift and transport of the patient, the utmost attention needs to be paid to that function. Whether the transport takes place in a hospital transfer situation, an accident scene, inside a home or business, or along a roadside, this is part of your job that is absolutely the most dangerous to your own safety.

One of the key elements in the proper transport of a patient is "*constant communication*" between both partners during the entire lift and transport. You both need to talk each other through every step of the process. One unexpected lurch because of not communicating could be a career ending event.

Take it from your MAAS Workers' Compensation Fund, we have seen whole EMS careers end with one back, knee or shoulder injury. Simply stated, "It can happen to you".

But I am Young, Strong & Healthy...

If you are young, in good health, strong, athletic -- do not say that "It won't happen to me". Historical data has shown that injuries are equal opportunity contributors and willing to cause pain and suffering to any person, no matter their age, sex or current physical status.

Permanent lifting restrictions, light duty work, physical therapy, even surgery are all likely outcomes if proper lifting techniques and effective communication systems are not followed.



Protect YOUR Back

It is your back. It is your life. It is your career. It is your responsibility to take the necessary precautions to ensure that you use the right equipment and follow proper procedures to protect your health. Your professional training and the laws of self preservation will let you know when you should be approaching a situation differently. Selfish Motivation, *which actually benefits everyone*, provides you with the professional integrity to utilize the proper methods and thereby best practices.