

**Forest Service Manual
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**Forest Service Manual 6900 – Emergency Medical Services
Chapter 60 – Agency and Non-Agency Assistance**

Amendment Number: 6900-2024-7

Effective date: January 17, 2024

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved by: ANTOINE DIXON, Deputy Chief, Business Operations

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Responsible Staff: Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Office of Safety and Occupational Health (OSOH)

Last Change:

Superseded Document(s): 6900_60, Amendment 6900-2020-7, June 15, 2020

Explanation of changes: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

6960: Removes all National Park Service (NPS) terms and references throughout chapter.

6961.2: Adds clarification for transport by government or privately owned vehicles.

6962.1-2: Adds clarification for DR 1800-001 6.y, furnish personnel and equipment for search and rescue. Removes reference to outside of National Forest boundary.

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6960: Establishes new chapter and sets forth codes, captions, and direction for Agency and Non-Agency Assistance.

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6961 - Assistance within the National Forest System

The Forest Service shall use local Emergency Medical Service (EMS) transportation options when available. The Forest Service is authorized to treat and transport employees, partners, contractors, cooperators, and members of the public lost or injured on National Forest System (NFS) lands, per 16 USC 554b, Medical care for employees engaged in hazardous work; notification and transportation of employees and 16 USC 575, Search for lost persons, and transportation of sick, injured, or dead persons, within national forests; authorization to incur expense, and then deliver them to the appropriate response agency personnel. In rare cases, the Forest Service may transport patients to definitive care if patient transfer is not available or delayed for a period of time that would jeopardize the life of the patient or risk serious medical complications.

Aircraft used in patient transportation must meet applicable standards for aircraft as required by the Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide and Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations. Aircraft not configured for emergency medical transport, such as helicopters used for fire management, may be used in special circumstances where immediate transport is in the patient's best interest.

All Forest Service employees who operate a government vehicle shall follow policy, per FSM 7100, Engineering Operations, chapter 30, section 7134.

During rare cases where the Forest Service provides patient transport, all emergency vehicle responses will be carried out in accordance with applicable State laws when possible. The operator of the emergency vehicle remains responsible for operating the vehicle with due regard for the safety of persons and property and shall operate the vehicle in such a manner so as not to further compromise or aggravate the condition of the patient(s) on board.

Patients may be transferred from a Forest Service EMS provider to an equal, or higher, trained provider who will complete transport to a medical facility. The patient may also be transferred to a "lower level" of care based on the nature of the patient's illness/injuries, the treatment provided, and the approval of medical control (base hospital).

6961.1 - Limitations

Forest Service EMS personnel may not provide scheduled, regular, or on-call assistance to the public, including the following activities:

1. The Forest Service may not provide regular EMS transport to injured or ill employees, partners, cooperators, or members of the public and may not purchase vehicles to serve as primary patient transport;

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2. Forest Service EMS employees may not provide any type of regular on-call medical assistance to the public, or be available for dispatch by local jurisdictions for EMS calls;
3. Forest Service EMS employees may not provide non-incidental treatment of members of the public at private homes/businesses;
4. Forest Service EMS employees may not buy “ambulance” equipment, operate an ambulance service, or modify agency vehicles to serve as primary patient transport. NOTE: Some equipment/supplies found in an ambulance may be an appropriate expenditure. Consult local medical direction and request national direction advice;
5. Forest Service EMS employees may not respond to motor vehicle accidents on public roads outside of NFS lands. Happenstance response events may occur when Forest Service EMS providers happen to be first on scene, but routine EMS responses off federal property are not authorized; and
6. Forest Service EMS employees may not transport members of the public, except when lost or injured on NFS lands, per 16 USC 554b, Medical care for employees engaged in hazardous work; notification and transportation of employees and 16 USC 575, Search for lost persons, and transportation of sick, injured, or dead persons, within national forests; authorization to incur expense and then, only for delivery to the appropriate response agency, or in rare cases to definitive care, if patient transfer is not available or delayed for a period of time that would jeopardize the life of the patient or risk serious medical complications.

6961.2 - Standards of Operation

The Forest Service will identify EMS transportation options in their EMS Plan and shall use their services when available.

Not all patients require transportation to a medical care facility in an ambulance. In those cases, transport via government vehicle or privately owned vehicle may be considered. If requested, the local EMS Medical Advisors may establish protocols for allowing patients to be transported by privately owned vehicles or similar methods.

6962 - Assistance to Other Agencies

The Forest Service may be requested to provide emergency assistance to the primary EMS response agency with jurisdiction. Emergency assistance may include EMS being provided by Forest Service EMS providers.

6962.1 - Limitations

1. Forest Service EMS personnel may not provide scheduled, regular, or on-call assistance to the public, except during limited circumstances.

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2. Per FSM 1500, External Relations, chapter 90, Defense and Emergency Operations and Homeland Security, section 1596.03, Policy, on NFS lands the local public authority, usually the county sheriff, is the Agency with primary responsibility for the protection of life and property and providing EMS response. Field personnel shall continue to be responsive to the public needs as they involve these aspects, with emphasis toward supporting and cooperating with the local officials. The Forest Service will temporarily assume the lead role in search and rescue operations when immediate action is necessary to prevent further danger, injury, suffering or death, but will assume the supporting role once agencies with jurisdiction arrive. In order to assume the supporting role, the Forest Service and responsible agency must have an agreement in place.
3. In cases of emergencies, per Department of Agriculture DR 1800-001, Incident Preparedness, Response, and Recovery 6.y. (1.j) Forest Service may “Furnish personnel and equipment for search and rescue work and other emergency measures on national forests and other lands where a temporary lead role will reduce suffering or loss of life;” However, the Forest Service has no authority to expend appropriated funds for search and rescue operations outside its boundaries on a routine DR 1800-001 6.y, Incident Preparedness, Response, and Recovery basis unless the search starts within and is extended outside the boundaries due to the demands of the situation. During an emergency where location is in doubt, the Forest Service will act as if it were located within the forest boundary until the location is otherwise established.
4. The Forest Service does not have the authority to respond to motor vehicle accidents on public roads outside of NFS lands. Happenstance response events may occur when Forest Service EMS providers happen to be first on scene, but routine EMS responses off federal property are not authorized.
5. Forest Service EMS employees do not have the authority to provide any type of regular on-call medical assistance to the public or be available for dispatch by local jurisdictions for EMS calls.
6. The Forest Service may provide emergency EMS assistance to other agencies, under the following conditions:
 - a. The incident is an emergency,
 - b. The incident is on NFS lands, or an agreement is in place,
 - c. Forest Service personnel or resources have been requested and an agreement is in place, and Forest Service personnel and resources have the proper certifications and authorizations needed to provide care, and
 - d. The ability to continue to provide appropriate emergency medical care within the home Forest Service unit is considered.

6962.2 - Standards of Operation

Forest Service EMS providers assisting other agencies must ensure that their certifications and authorizations allow them to do so. There are several ways that this can be accomplished:

1. Forest Service providers must possess an interagency EMS credential.
2. Forest Service providers may be certified by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians and/or the State or local agency may recognize National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians' credentials.
3. The State may grant Forest Service EMS providers certification based on reciprocity of National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians' credentials, the credentials of another State, or the Forest Service EMS credential.

Forest Service providers assisting other agencies remain federal employees acting within the scope of their employment. Accordingly, Forest Service EMS providers must always act within their scope of practice and certification, even if that differs from other providers on the scene.

In order to provide support to other agencies, the Forest Service units will establish written agreements with the agencies of jurisdiction. These agreements will specify that the Forest Service EMS providers must remain under the direction of the local EMS Medical Advisor, follow the Forest Service EMS Protocols and Procedures, and include required certification, authorizations, and limitations specific to the Agency with which the agreement is made.

Forest Service EMS providers may be dispatched to an incident through the interagency incident coordination system and may be assigned directly to a crew or to the Medical Unit. Those personnel assigned to provide EMS must be authorized by a federal agency with jurisdiction or by the State in which the incident is occurring.