

# EMS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Program Overview

### What is the US Forest Service (USFS/FS) Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program?

The EMS program is a USFS initiative (previously a partnership with the National Park Service) to facilitate prompt and professional EMS care in the event of a medical emergency on FS lands. This is especially needed given the nature of land management agency work, where injuries and illnesses can happen far from hospitals, ambulance access, and other emergency services.

The EMS program operates on Directives [Forest Service Manual 6900 \(FSM 6900\)](#) and utilizes protocols and procedures as defined in the [USFS EMS Protocol and Procedures Manual, 2022](#).

FS units engaged under the program have the benefit of:

- Full use of our EMS Program Management team in DC.
- Full time medical advisement in DC under our FS National Medical Director
- Standardized policies, credentialing, protocols & procedures, and training; and afford flexibility to tailor to support unique needs of a FS unit(s).
- Utilization of FS EMS team members throughout the US, for advice, lessons learned, and emergency response.
- Utilization of our Local Emergency Medical Advisor (LEMA)/Medical Director team (90% volunteer), many of which are world renowned in wilderness medicine.

The FS EMS Program is an interdisciplinary program that supports many disciplines in the FS. The Washington Office provides programmatic funding through the Office of Safety & Occupational Health (OSOH) and Fire & Aviation Management (FAM). Within each region, SOH, FAM, and other disciplines, as applicable, support the individual units.

### Are FS EMTs volunteers?

No. EMTs and all levels of EMS Providers that are employees within the FS have agreed to take on these responsibilities as a Collateral Duty. In addition, the FS hires administratively determined (AD) temporary employees that are EMS providers credentialed through the FS and work fulltime as EMS providers when on assignment.

### What is a LEMA?

LEMA stands for Local Emergency Medical Advisor and is a physician with a background or experience in EMS who has agreed to support FS EMS providers in the local forest. The LEMA provides medical oversight, quality assurance and training as part of their duties. The LEMA also serves as the EMS providers' Medical Control/oversight physician when they travel to other temporary assignments away from the home forest.

Please work with your Regional EMS Coordinator and Unit EMS Coordinator (as applicable to your region) to verify status of unique local protocols, and gaining expanded scope of practices. These are established relative to need, and guidance plus approval of the unit LEMA with coordination, management, and documentation by the EMS Coordinator(s).

### How can we support our EMS providers to ensure they get robust, quality trainings?

The recognition that a FS EMS provider generally has a low frequency of patient contacts, with high-risk for medical emergencies is important. Regular, robust trainings are an essential element of the

EMS Program to ensure our medical providers have the training to perform their EMS skills under stressful situations.

Annual LEMA-led trainings are strongly recommended. This builds relationships between the physicians & EMS providers to allow for provider educational and skill development. Scenario based training is a robust method to practice skills while receiving rapid reviews and guidance. The program goal is to not train to the minimum requirements of a provider's level, but to instead train to ensure all FS providers are proficient in the skills necessary to provide excellent patient care. While there are new avenues for Continuing Medical Education (CME), annual in-person training is important in tandem with online internal or external trainings. Please collaborate with your Unit EMS Coordinator and/or Regional EMS Coordinator as applicable to your area.

### **When is the best time to schedule training?**

Timing depends upon several factors and should be assessed with your Regional and Unit EMS Coordinators. While the downtime in the middle of winter may be the most convenient, trainings that occur closer to the field season may be more beneficial for refreshing and retention of knowledge. Options may also include hosting a spring training with the unit LEMA and providers, and having a late fall/winter training opportunity. And ideally, providers would have access to training equipment and materials throughout the year so they may practice independently as their schedule allows.

### **Where can I find more information about the EMS program?**

For more information, please send an email to: [SM.FS.EMS@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.EMS@usda.gov).

Programmatic questions, issues and feedback may be addressed by reaching out to our DC based team via the FS EMS Program Manager:

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### **Who is the EMS Point of Contact at my forest?**

The exact structure of the EMS teams through the FS may vary. Most have a *Regional EMS Coordinator* and then a *Unit EMS Coordinator* to support each individual unit (e.g., Bighorn National Forest). EMS Coordinators oversee and manage many elements of the local-level implementation. These include but are not limited to being EMS subject matter experts, primary Point-of-Contact for unit EMS providers for programmatic, administrative & non-emergency medical guidance and questions; manages funding, supplies, equipment, prescriptions, etc. They also serve as the unit's primary POC with the LEMA(s).

## **Certification and Credentialing**

### **What certification or license is required to obtain a FS EMS credential?**

An EMS provider with a current National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) certification and/or an unrestricted State, Territory, or District of Columbia license, current professional CPR certification (e.g., BLS for healthcare providers), and, if applicable, current ACLS certification, qualifies for authorization, and issuance of a FS EMS credential.

#### Approved Courses

The program operates under the [National EMS Education Standards](#) for Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Advanced EMT (AEMT), and Paramedic (EMTP)

curriculum.

### **What is a FS EMS credential? Who needs one to qualify as an EMS provider?**

The *FS EMS Credential* is the EMS provider's evidence of authorization to perform EMS at a specified level of care based on a certification, while acting within their scope of employment. EMS credentials are issued for provider levels EMR and above to support both Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support providers, as applicable to the needs of the unit.

All FS employees (permanent, perm. seasonal, temporary, administratively determined, volunteer, etc.) must obtain an EMS credential through the FS EMS Program to practice EMS within the agency.

Two credentials are issued to each provider, and upon completion of application processing are shipped to the Unit EMS Coordinator. With approval of the Unit EMS Coordinator, an employee whose application has been processed, and has received email access to the electronic patient care system (ePCR) may be allowed to practice prior to receiving the physical credential.

### **How do I apply for an EMS credential?**

Once a Unit EMS Coordinator has identified the need for a provider to be in the system, that individual will collaborate with the Unit EMS Coordinator to complete and submit the credentialing application.

Once approved by the local and DC based EMS team, a credential will be produced and sent directly to the Unit EMS coordinator for distribution.

The EMS team verifies the following information as part of processing applications:

- Unit (e.g., Kaibab National Forest) is formally part of the FS EMS program.
- Applicant's identity
- Certification validity for all providers levels requesting
- Any background check information
- Applicant verification of recommended immunizations

Required documentation includes copies of the following:

- Current NREMT or state certification card(s)
- Current healthcare professional CPR card
- Current ACLS card, if applicable
- Other EMS certifications, if applicable

### **My credential has the National Park Service name and shield on it. Are these still valid credentials for the FS?**

*It depends.*

Yes - if the credential is current (i.e., not expired).

### **Will my EMS credential expire? What is the process for renewal?**

EMS credentials expire the date that the provider's NREMT certification and/or state license expires. *FS EMS credentials should be renewed within 14 days after the expiration of a provider's certification(s).* The process to renew EMS credentials is the same as the initial application processes. Work through your Unit EMS Coordinator to submit your renewal application.

Required documentation includes copies of the following:

- Current NREMT and/or state certification card(s)
- Current healthcare professional CPR card
- Current ACLS card, if applicable
- Other EMS certifications, if applicable

Note: There may be some lag time in the renewal process that is outside of the provider's control. For time-sensitive situations, a provider should work through their Unit EMS Coordinator to submit a request to the EMS team for a temporary extension past the 14-day deadline.

### **Does my Wilderness First Responder (WFR) certification qualify me for an EMS credential?**

No, because a WFR certification is not a nationally recognized EMS provider level. However, many WFR courses meet the National EMS Education Standards for EMR. If your WFR class met these standards and you complete the *FS's WFR to EMR Transition* steps, then you would be eligible to be credentialed as a FS EMR provider. Please work with your Unit EMS Coordinator or Regional EMS Coordinator, as applicable to your area.

## **EMS Protocols**

### **What protocols will providers operate under?**

FS EMS Protocols and Procedures Manual, 2022 is a series of procedures, protocols and medications that are approved for use by all EMS team members performing EMS at the EMR, EMT, AEMT, Parkmedic, and Paramedic levels. The EMS team will not deviate from the manual unless specific modifications have been processed & documented through the unit EMS Coordinator and approved by the unit LEMA.

Please note that the protocols will be available on this website in the future.

To obtain copies email the EMS team at [SM.FS.EMS@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.EMS@usda.gov).

FS *internal access* to the EMS Program website is located in the [World of Safety \(OSHO\) – Washington Office of Safety and Occupational Health](#) section → [Emergency Medical Services Program \(EMS Program\)](#).