

Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL	
Section: G. Emergency Medical Services	Effective Date: March 1, 2010
Topic: 8. Occupational Health & Safety	Replaces: G.4.42
Subject: 5.1. Ergonomics	
Policy No. G.8.5.1.	Page 1 of 4

PURPOSE

To provide Paramedics/EMAs with guidelines for the exercising of caution and safety when lifting, moving, loading and unloading patients.

APPLICATION

Paramedics, EMAs

PROCEDURE

- The ambulance shall be parked in a location that will provide safety and protection for the patient and Paramedics/EMAs while patient care is provided or the patient is loaded or unloaded.
- Routes between the ambulance and the patient must be clear of hazards before transporting patient.
- Assistance from other emergency services, public safety personnel or bystanders may be utilized to maximize the safety of all persons.
- Lifting and carrying of patients shall be performed using appropriate patient carrying equipment. All lifts shall involve using proper body posture and techniques. (i.e. bent knees, straight back with no body extension, etc.) as indicated by the following guidelines.

Guidelines

The expression "Lift with your legs and not your back." is a very important part of proper body mechanics. Always get as close to the patient as you can when lifting. Keep your arms and patient as close to your body as you can to help create leverage and maintain balance. Bend at the knees while keeping your back as straight as possible. Recognize your limitations and call for back-up when needed to lift patient.

Guidelines for Safe Lifting

- Consider the weight of the patient together with the weight of the stretcher or other equipment being carried and determine if additional help is needed.
- Know your physical ability and limitations. Know your combined ability with your partner. If absolutely necessary, you can ask bystanders to help. You or your partner must be in charge and give the orders, not the bystander.
- Lift without twisting. Avoid any kind of swinging motion when lifting as well.
- Position your feet shoulder width apart with one foot slightly in front of the

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other. Wear proper boots that go above the ankle to protect your feet and help keep a firm footing. Boots should have nonskid soles.

- Communicate clearly and frequently with your partner. Decide ahead of time how you will move the patient and what verbal commands will be used. Also, tell the patient what you will be doing ahead of time. A startled patient may reach out or grab something and cause a loss of balance.

Guidelines for Lifting Cots and Stretchers

- Know or find out the weight to be lifted.
- Use a minimum of two people to lift
- Use an even number of people if possible balance during the lift.
- Know the weight limitations of the equipment you use. Know what to do if the patient exceeds the weight limitations of the equipment.
- Use the power lift or squat lift position. Feet are shoulder width apart. Back is tight and the abdominal muscles lock the lower back in a slight inward curve. Distribute weight to the balls of the feet. Keep both feet in full contact with floor or ground. While standing, keep the back locked in, as the upper body comes up before the hips.
- Use a power grip to get maximum force from the hands. Hands should be at least 10 inches apart. Palms face up and fingers in complete contact with the stretcher bar.
- Lift while keeping your back in the locked-in position.
- When lowering the cot or stretcher, reverse the steps.
- Avoid bending at the waist.
- Avoid twisting. "Feed" the stretcher into the ambulance while facing across the patient.

Guidelines for Carrying Patients and Equipment

- Whenever possible, move patients on devices that can be rolled.
- Minimize the distance needed to carry patients
- Know the weight to be carried.
- Work in a coordinated manner with your partner.
- Keep the weight as close to your body as possible.
- Keep your back in a locked-in position and refrain from twisting.
- Flex at the hips, NOT the waist, and bend at the knees.
- Do not hyperextend your back (do not lean back from the waist).
- Try to lift with a partner that has similar height and strength.

Guidelines for Safe Carrying on Stairs

- Use a stair chair if the patient's condition allows it.
- Keep your back in the locked-in position.
- Flex at the hips, NOT the waist, and bend at the knees.

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- Keep the weight and your arms as close to your body as possible.
- If a stair chair cannot be used, a Scoop Stretcher, Back Board or Canvas Stretcher can be used. Always carry patients head first up the stairs and feet first down the stairs.
- Try to carry heavy patients up a stairway with two people at the top, shoulder to shoulder, and two at the bottom of the lifting device.

Guidelines for Pushing and Pulling

- Push whenever possible rather than pull.
- Keep your back locked-in.
- Keep elbows bent with arms close to sides.
- Keep the line of pull through the center of your body by bending your knees.
- Keep weight close to body.
- Push at a level between your waist and shoulders.
- Use kneeling position if weight is below waist level.
- Avoid pushing and pulling from overhead position.

Guidelines for Fore and Aft Lift

- This is only used when a spinal injury is not suspected. It is best used for short distances.
- One Paramedic/EMA kneels at the patient's head and the other Paramedic/EMA kneels at the patient's side by the knees.
- The Paramedic/EMA at the head reaches under the patient arms at the shoulders and grasps the patient's wrists. If the patient is unresponsive or uncooperative, the second Paramedic/EMA may assist by lifting the patient's wrists to within the reach of the partner. To improve stability, the patient's left wrist may be grasped by your right hand and their right wrist by your left hand. This crosses the patient's arms over their chest creating a more secure hold with less give.
- The second Paramedic/EMA reaches under both knees with one arm and under the buttocks with the other arm.
- The Paramedics/EMA's rise to a crouching position, then simultaneously stand and move with the patient to the stretcher.

Note: These procedures must be used in conjunction with each individual lifting device's Occupational Health and Safety Safe Working Practice Manual (located in the G.8. series of Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB Policy and Procedures Manual), associated Equipment User Manuals and In Service Training.

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