



La Plata County EMS Council

142 Sheppard Drive, Durango, Colorado 81303

Special Event Prehospital Medical Information

This information is intended for individuals planning events within La Plata County (including the City of Durango) in which medical personnel and/or medical transport vehicles are to be used:

Personnel

The use of certified medical personnel presents a set of legal challenges event directors, sponsors and permit applicants should understand as they decide what services to use for their event.

The State of Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) regulates the certification and practice of Emergency Medical Service providers. One key element is that EMS providers of all levels (EMT, Advanced EMT, EMT-Intermediate, and Paramedic) are not individually licensed to practice medicine, but instead are certified by the state to work specifically under the license of a Medical Director via formal written protocols.

One common misunderstanding is that an event can legally use EMS providers as medical personnel without a Medical Director and protocols. Another misconception is that the event legally can use EMS providers, but use an alternative title (e.g., course marshal, aid station attendant, etc.) and the providers are then protected under Colorado Good Samaritan statutes if they need to act in a medical capacity. Both of these situations place the providers at risk of disciplinary actions against their certifications by the CDPHE and allegations of practicing medicine without a license by the Colorado Medical Board. Additionally, there are consequences for the event itself for hiring unlicensed medical personnel.

So what are your options?

1. In most cases, the best option is to contract with a local EMS agency to manage the planning and execution of the medical part of your event. Fully-trained, certified and experienced personnel working under their normal Medical Director and familiar protocols are paramount. However, this may not always be an option, as agencies and personnel are already taxed with providing daily emergency services in addition to numerous events. Contact the agency with geographical jurisdiction as early as possible to request medical personnel.
2. Using local EMS providers to work individually for the event, but under their normal Medical Director is another good option. It's best to get a letter from the Medical Director that they support the event in this capacity and alert your insurance company as well. The agency with jurisdiction can help you with this process.
3. Search and Rescue, Medical Reserve Corps and Red Cross volunteers may also be available to assist. Keep in mind, some of these individuals may be certified EMS providers practicing as such and will need formal Medical Direction and protocols, as explained above.

4. The use of Colorado registered nurses and Colorado licensed doctors to provide medical care avoids the issues described above with certified EMS providers, but may pose significant liability issues for those individuals. Check with your insurance provider about liability concerns.
5. Multi-county events that use EMS providers are also subject to the same concerns of medical direction and protocols. The Council will not recommend approval of permit applications that do not include full event plans, including information about formal medical direction and protocols.

Use of Ambulances Not Licensed in La Plata County

Ambulance licensing is specific to each county under Colorado law. Unlicensed ambulances cannot transport patients except under extreme circumstances, defined by the individual county regulations. In La Plata County, the resolution provides for a licensing exception only during a “*major catastrophe or emergency when ambulances with permits in the localities of the catastrophe or emergency are insufficient to render the services required.*” Under the current regulation, unlicensed ambulances simply being closer to an incident because they are assigned to the event does not meet this exception.

Although the event may bring very experienced paramedics and other medical personnel, there are solid reasons for activation of the local EMS system beyond simple regulatory: Knowledge of the system and procedures for trauma alerts and activations, hospital destination protocols, as well as other systems approaches to quality prehospital care in the local area, are unlikely to be known and followed by visiting responders. Knowledge of geographical concerns, proper activation and communications with any of the three aeromedical organizations operating in La Plata County is also tricky. And each year, the local hospitals report that ambulances not licensed in La Plata County have transported patients from some of the various “through events,” often having to call them for directions to the hospital! Thus, the EMS Council would like to see a more coordinated approach preventing the limiting of access to the entire emergency medical system.

If your event has received a La Plata County and/or City of Durango permit and you are using an unlicensed ambulance:

It is vital that your ambulance organization (including management AND staff working the event) understand the following:

- All units should check in with the Durango/La Plata Communications Center to assure communication is functional and avoid confusion during an incident.
- If the event includes an incident management plan, assure your emergency services team is a formal part of that plan.
- Have a communications plan to be able to talk directly with local resources.
- Activate the local EMS system through the Durango/La Plata Communications Center as soon as possible if an incident occurs. They can always be cancelled.
- Of course, transport critical patients if necessary and rendezvous with local units, or be in communication so they can assist with other activations, etc.

If you have questions, please contact the La Plata County EMS Council at: 970-382-6039 or sholesst@durangofiresecue.org