

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

■ Job Description

The emergency medical technician (EMT) provides basic life support care to ill and/or injured patients at the scene of an accident and while transporting patients to a hospital. The technician determines the extent of illness or injury, provides initial emergency care, and reports the patient's condition to the emergency department or medical control center.

The EMT is trained in basic emergency skills such as opening airways; giving artificial respiration and cardiac resuscitation; administering oxygen; controlling bleeding; treating shock; stabilizing fractured limbs; bandaging; assisting in childbirth; caring for poison, burn, or drug overdose patients; and managing mentally disturbed people. The EMT is also trained in rescue techniques such as freeing people trapped in cars, using self-contained breathing apparatus, and handling hazardous materials.

Emergency care paramedics receive additional training in advanced life support techniques so they can administer medications, start intravenous infusion, provide advanced cardiac care, and carry out treatment ordered by the physician.

■ Job Settings

EMTs and paramedics provide emergency care at the scene of an accident or illness and in ambulance vehicles en route to hospitals.

■ Projected Need

Nationally and in Illinois, employment of EMTs is expected to grow faster than average through 2010. Much of the growth will come from volunteer positions changing into paid positions. As the population grows, there will be a need for more emergency services. Also, the number of older adults is increasing. Older adults are the greatest users of emergency services. Both of these factors will increase the need for EMTs.

Some EMTs will leave this occupation because of the irregular work hours and the fast pace of the work. Some may leave the occupation because the pay is low and there is little room for advancement. Because pay and benefits are usually better with fire, police, and rescue squads, applicants for these positions will face

more competition. Job growth will be slower in these public agencies.

In Illinois, there were about 6,550 EMTs employed in this small occupation in 2000.

■ Salaries

Nationally, the median wage for emergency medical technicians is \$11.14 per hour. Half of all EMTs earn between \$8.87 and \$14.51 per hour.

In Illinois, EMTs earn a median wage of \$11.65 per hour.

Pay varies by employment setting and area of the country. Those who work for local governments earn more than those at hospitals or private ambulance firms. Those who work in larger cities or communities where the cost of living is higher tend to earn higher wages.

■ Related Careers

Surgical technologist, nurse, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife, respiratory therapist, perfusionist (cardiopulmonary technician), and physician assistant

■ Differences in Training

Emergency medical technician programs are available at community colleges, hospitals, and fire departments. There are several levels of EMT training. The first is EMT-Basic. This program offers courses in patient assessment, trauma, and cardiac emergencies. Students learn how to use and care for equipment, such as backboards, suction tools, and oxygen systems. This program is preparation for the next two levels of training.

The second level is EMT-Intermediate training. Students may attend classes called EMT-Shock Trauma. This program teaches how to give intravenous (IV) fluids and some medications. Students may also study EMT-Cardiac where they learn about heart rhythms and how to give more advanced medications. This level of training usually requires 35 to 55 hours of instruction.

The most advanced level of training is EMT-Paramedic. This program lasts up to two years. EMTs usually receive pay while completing this level of training because it requires extensive field experience. After completing this level, students receive an associate's degree.

The military provides excellent training for this occupation. A military training program in emergency medical care takes up to 54 weeks to complete.

The following schools in Illinois offer EMT programs:

Black Hawk College - Moline
Carl Sandburg College - Galesburg
College of DuPage - Glen Ellyn
College of Lake County - Grayslake
Elgin Community College - Elgin
Frontier Community College - Fairfield
Harper College - Palatine
Heartland Community College - Normal
Illinois Central College - East Peoria
John A. Logan College - Carterville
John Wood Community College - Quincy
Joliet Junior College - Joliet
Kankakee Community College - Kankakee
Lake Land College - Mattoon
Lincoln Land Community College - Springfield
Malcolm X College - Chicago
McHenry County College - Crystal Lake
Moraine Valley Community College - Palos Hills
Oakton Community College - Des Plaines
Parkland College - Champaign
Prairie State College - Chicago Heights
Rend Lake College - Ina
Richland Community College - Decatur
Sauk Valley Community College - Dixon
South Suburban College - South Holland
Southeastern Illinois College - Harrisburg
Southwestern Illinois College - Belleville
Triton College - River Grove
Waubensee Community College - Sugar Grove
Wilbur Wright College - Chicago

■ **Related Educational Programs**

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/login.asp>

[Emergency Medical Care](#)

■ **Credentials**

The Illinois Department of Public Health licenses pre-hospital emergency care personnel in three classifications: EMT-Basic, EMT-Intermediate, and EMT-Paramedic. Licenses are issued for a four-year period. Licenses are renewable upon request for persons who meet continuing education, refresher training, and skills performance evaluations.

For additional information, contact:

Illinois Department of Public Health
525 West Jefferson
Springfield, IL 62761
Phone: 217.785.2080
Fax: 217.782.3987
<http://www.idph.state.il.us>

■ **Resources**

National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians
Rocco V. Morando Building
6610 Busch Boulevard
P.O. Box 29233
Columbus, OH 43229
Phone: 614.888.4484
<http://www.nremt.org>

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
408 Monroe Street
P.O. Box 1400
Clinton, MS 39060-1400
Phone: 800.346.2368
<http://www.naemt.org>