

International Hazard Datasheets on Occupation



Driver, ambulance

What is a Hazard Datasheet on Occupation?

This datasheet is one of the International Datasheets on Occupations. It is intended for those professionally concerned with health and safety at work: occupational physicians and nurses, safety engineers, hygienists, education and Information specialists, inspectors, employers' representatives, workers' representatives, safety officers and other competent persons.

This datasheet lists, in a standard format, different hazards to which driver, ambulances may be exposed in the course of their normal work. This datasheet is a source of information rather than advice. With the knowledge of what causes injuries and diseases, is easier to design and implement suitable measures towards prevention.

This datasheet consists of four pages:

- Page 1: Information on the most relevant hazards related to the occupation.
- Page 2: A more detailed and systematized presentation on the **different hazards** related to the job with indicators for preventive measures (marked as numbered shields and explained on the third page).
- Page 3: Suggestions for **preventive measures** for selected hazards.
- Page 4: **Specialized information**, relevant primarily to occupational safety and health professionals and including information such as a brief job description, a list of tasks, notes and references.






Who is a driver ambulance?

A worker who drives an ambulance, or a similar special vehicle, to transport sick, injured or convalescent persons to/from a hospital or other health facility, and performs various duties related to this main job.

What is dangerous about this job?

- Ambulance drivers are at increased risk of road accidents due to high driving speeds under emergency conditions.
- Ambulance drivers often are in physical contact with people who have contagious diseases, which is a serious health hazard.
- Ambulance drivers often help to lift and move patients. They also do other physically demanding jobs, which may result in back pains and other similar problems.
- Ambulance drivers often work under time pressure and at irregular hours. They come into contact with unpleasant sides of life. All this may be harmful to their wellbeing and cause psychological stress.

Hazards related to this job

Accident hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased risk of road accidents due to high driving speeds under abnormal emergency conditions (including crossing controlled intersections off of marked or regulated roads while trying to reach destination through traffic jams) 	1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slips, trips and falls (on stairs or on the level) while carrying stretchers and loads, or assisting patients 	2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injuries as a result of carrying out various functions (field repair tasks, tire changes, etc.) of a vehicle driver (see truck driver, chauffeur, etc.) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risks associated with sudden release of compressed gases (e.g., oxygen or anesthetic gases) inside the ambulance 	
Physical hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to high noise levels from the emergency horn 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to radioactive isotopes (in some countries where ambulances are used for the transport of radioisotopes to hospitals) 	
Chemical hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to anesthetic gases administered to patients inside the ambulance 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dermatitis caused by excessive use of rinsing, cleaning, and disinfecting agents 	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential sensitization to latex : possibility of developing asthma, dermatitis or anaphylaxis 	4
Biological hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to contagious diseases from patients 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infections due to the exposure to blood, body fluids or tissue specimens possibly leading to blood-borne diseases such as HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. 	5 6 7 8 9
Ergonomic, psychosocial and organizational factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back pain and other musculoskeletal problems resulting from factors such as overexertion and incorrect postures during lifting and otherwise moving of patients, driving over bumpy roads, and repairing vehicles on road. 	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological stress due to factors such as dangerous driving under time pressure, contact with accident victims, terminal patients and cadavers, unusual working schedules, and prolonged states of alertness. 	11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential exposure to violence, especially when transporting or treating patients suffering from emotional stress or behavioural problems. 	12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to severely traumatized patients, multiple victims of a disaster or catastrophic event or severely violent patients may lead to post-traumatic stress syndrome. 	13

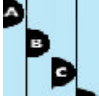
Preventive measures

- 1** Only a trained and qualified professional ambulance driver should be employed in that occupation
 - 2** Wear safety shoes with non-skid soles
 - 3** Protect hands with chemical-resistant gloves; if impractical, use a barrier cream
 - 4** Test for latex allergy and provide non-allergenic gloves if necessary
 - 5** Hepatitis B vaccination must be available to ambulance drivers; ambulance drivers must be familiar with the ambulance service procedures control plan regarding exposure to body fluids
 - 6** Follow established appropriate infection control precautions assuming blood, body fluids and tissue are infectious
 - 7** Routinely use barriers (such as gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shields) and gowns)
 - 8** Wash hands and other exposed skin surfaces after coming into contact with blood or body fluids
 - 9** Follow appropriate procedures in handling and disposing of sharp instruments or needles
 - 10** Learn and use safe lifting and moving techniques for heavy or awkward loads; use mechanical aids to assist in lifting
 - 11** Seek psychological or vocational advice if experiencing work-related stresses or burnout
 - 12** Train employees how to recognize and respond to threat of violence; provide means for summoning help or escort if needed
 - 13** Procedures and counselling services should be available to workers exposed to post-traumatic stress syndrome
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Specialized information

Synonyms Diver, pearl diver, sponge diver, oyster diver, diving fisherman.

Definitions and/or description Using surface supplied compressed air or air from self-contained breathing apparatus (SCUBA), dives in waters up to 60 metres depth to hunt for fish using spears; to gather shell fish; to gather marine life for aquaria or to harvest fish traps. On rotation (while not diving) may be called to monitor the compressor, tend to diving air hoses, operate the boat, prepare the catch for storage and transportation. Prior to departure from village will inspect the diving equipment and may be called upon to inspect and maintain the boat and compressor motors. On shore may be called upon to build and repair fish traps as well as diving boats. May also engage in diving salvage operations. Catching fish and other forms of aquatic life, selling some produce at local markets.



Related and specific occupations Commercial diver, boat operator, diving tender, fisherman, coastal waters, subsistence agricultural and fishery workers.

Tasks Anchoring; attaching; boat operating; building (boats); building (traps); checking; cooking; diving; fueling; handling (lines); handling (hoses); handling (marine products); harvesting; inspecting; lifting; loading; lubricating; maintaining; navigating; observing; operating; positioning; repairing; sorting; storing; transporting; trapping; unloading

Primary equipment used Air Hose; anchors; boats; compressor; depth gauge; dive flag; diving mask; fins; fish trap; gloves; nets; shirts (long sleeve with roll collar); spear; spear gun; shoes; ropes; SCUBA equipment; watch; weight belt

Workplaces where the occupation is common Basically operates in tropical, shallow waters from open dive boats. May travel several days from home base depending on season, weather and target catch.

Notes According to research carried out and in Thailand by Indigenous Fishermen Diver Project and in the Philippines by the Diving Diseases Research Centre (DDRC), there is a high incidence of decompression sickness (DCS) among the diving population. (As much as 85% of the diving population in Thailand suffers from type I DCS). There are also large numbers of fisherman divers with DON as evidenced by recent research by DDRC in the Philippines.



Both the Thai and Philippines projects have reported a considerably elevated mortality rate due to diving related injury and illness.

Home made, poor and deficient equipment has not been designed for safe diving and carries no provisions for secondary air sources.

No or limited access to first aid, medical care nor recompression facilities.

Work is often carried out at long distances from any form of assistance and there is no means of communications from the boat to sources of assistance.

References Gold, D: The Sea Gypsies of Thailand. Asian Diver Magazine. 12/97. Vol 6 No 4



Gold, D: Indigenous Divers, in Stellman, J. (Ed) The ILO Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 4th Edition, ILO Geneva, 1998. Vol 3. pp 66.3-4.

McDonald, K. Bends in the Philippines. Diver. 7/95. Vol 40 No 7.
