

# 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 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

Specific preventive measures can be seen by clicking on the respective in the third column of the table.

<b>Accident hazards</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slips, trips and falls (on stairs or on the level) while carrying stretchers and loads, or assisting patients</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injuries as a result of carrying out various functions (field repair tasks, tire changes, etc.) of a vehicle driver (see truck driver, chauffeur, etc.)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risks associated with sudden release of compressed gases (e.g., oxygen or anesthetic gases) inside the ambulance</li> </ul>	
<b>Physical hazards</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to high noise levels from the emergency horn</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to radioactive isotopes (in some countries where ambulances are used for the transport of radioisotopes to hospitals)</li> </ul>	

<b>Chemical hazards</b> 	Exposure to anesthetic gases administered to patients inside the ambulance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dermatitis caused by excessive use of rinsing, cleaning, and disinfecting agents</li> </ul>	3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential sensitization to latex : possibility of developing asthma, dermatitis or anaphylaxis</li> </ul>	4
<b>Biological hazards</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to contagious diseases from patients</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	5 6 7 8 9
<b>Ergonomic, psychosocial and organizational factors</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential exposure to violence, especially when transporting or treating patients suffering from emotional stress or behavioural problems.</li> </ul>	12
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to severely traumatized patients, multiple victims of a disaster or catastrophic event or severely violent patients may lead to post-traumatic stress syndrome.</li> </ul>	13

## Preventive measures

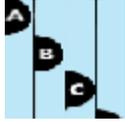
- 1 Only a trained and qualified professional ambulance driver should be employed in that occupation
- 2 Wear safety shoes with non-skid soles
- 3 Protect hands with chemical-resistant gloves; if impractical, use a barrier cream
- 4 Test for latex allergy and provide non-allergenic gloves if necessary
- 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

## Specialized information

**Synonyms** Ambulance driver (government or public services); ambulance driver (private services); emergency vehicle driver.

### Definitions and/or description

Drives ambulance to transport sick, injured or convalescent persons: Places patients on stretcher and loads stretcher into ambulance, usually with help of ambulance attendant (medical services). Takes sick or injured persons to hospital, or convalescent to destination, using knowledge and skill to avoid sudden motions detrimental to patients. Changes soiled linen on stretcher. Administers first aid as needed. May restrain violent patients. May report facts concerning accident or emergency to hospital personnel or law enforcement officials [DOT]. May assist in delivering babies inside the ambulance. May transport cadavers. Also: a person who drives a medical emergency vehicle - ambulance, or hospital services (civil or military) vehicle; may be responsible for the maintenance of the vehicle



### Related and specific occupations

Police ambulance driver; military ambulance driver; private ambulance driver; motor-vehicle driver (medical services); medical services driver; hospital/clinic driver; funeral car/hearse driver/chauffeur; ambulance attendant; ambulance-team/nursing aid; emergency medical technician; pilot of ambulance/rescue/ medevac aircraft

### Tasks

Administering (medicines, oxygen, etc.); assisting; carrying; changing; cleaning; communicating; driving; documenting; handling; honking (the horn); lifting; loading; locating; logging; maintaining; mending; operating; placing; pulling and pushing; repairing; reporting; restraining; reviving; servicing; shackling; stretching; transporting; warning; writing

### Primary equipment used

Ambulance, van or a similar vehicle; standard tools of an ambulance driver; emergency care, first aid and patient handling equipment (stretchers, oxygen bottles, masks, gloves, defibrillating equipment, blood pressure, respiratory monitors, etc); communication equipment

### Workplaces where the occupation is common

Health systems and facilities (civilian, military or paramilitary; public or private): ambulance services/stations, hospitals, convalescence and old-age homes, etc.

### Notes

For additional information on hazards related to driving and servicing motor vehicles, see datasheets on other occupations: "Chauffeur", "Truck/Lorry Driver", "Automobile Mechanic", etc.



### References

Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 4th Ed., ILO, Geneva, 1998, Vol.3, p. 95.18 - 95.19.



This information has been compiled by the Israel Institute for Occupational Safety and Hygiene jointly with the BIA (Germany).