

EMTs and Paramedics

Summary

In emergencies, EMTs and paramedics are dispatched by a 911 operator to the scene, where they often work with police and firefighters.

| Quick Facts: EMTs and Paramedics | |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2010 Median Pay | \$30,360 per year \$14.60 per hour |
| Entry-Level Education | Postsecondary non-degree award |
| Work Experience in a Related Occupation | None |
| On-the-job Training | None |
| Number of Jobs, 2010 | 226,500 |
| Job Outlook, 2010-20 | 33% (Much faster than average) |
| Employment Change, 2010-20 | 75,400 |

[What EMTs and Paramedics Do](#)

Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics care for the sick or injured in emergency medical settings. People's lives often depend on their quick reaction and competent care. EMTs and paramedics respond to emergency calls, performing medical services and transporting patients to medical facilities.

[Work Environment](#)

Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics work both indoors and outdoors, in all types of weather. Their work is physically strenuous and can be stressful, sometimes involving life-or-death situations and patients who are suffering.

[How to Become an EMT or Paramedic](#)

All EMTs and paramedics must complete a formal training program. All states require EMTs and paramedics to be licensed; requirements vary by state.

[Pay](#)

The median annual wage of EMTs and paramedics was \$30,360 in May 2010.

[Job Outlook](#)

Employment of EMTs and paramedics is expected to grow by 33 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for all occupations.

[Similar Occupations](#)

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of EMTs and paramedics with similar occupations.

[O*NET](#)

O*NET provides comprehensive information on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

[Contacts for More Information](#)

Learn more about EMTs and paramedics by contacting these additional resources.

What EMTs and Paramedics Do

EMTs and paramedics use special equipment, including backboards and restraints, to immobilize patients and secure them in the ambulance for transport.

Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics care for the sick or injured in emergency medical settings. People's lives often depend on their quick reaction and competent care. EMTs and paramedics respond to emergency calls, performing medical services and transporting patients to medical facilities.

A 911 operator sends EMTs and paramedics to the scene of an emergency, where they often work with police and firefighters. For more information, see the profiles on [police and detectives](#) and [firefighters](#).

Duties

EMTs and paramedics typically do the following:

- Respond to 911 calls for emergency medical assistance, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or bandaging a wound
- Assess a patient's condition and determine a course of treatment
- Follow guidelines that they learned in training and that they receive from physicians who oversee their work
- Use backboards and restraints to keep patients still and safe in an ambulance for transport
- Help transfer patients to the emergency department of a healthcare facility and report their observations and treatment to the staff

- Create a patient care report; documenting the medical care they gave the patient
- Replace used supplies and check or clean equipment after use

When taking a patient to the hospital, one EMT or paramedic may drive the ambulance while another monitors the patient's vital signs and gives additional care. Some paramedics work as part of a helicopter's flight crew to transport critically ill or injured patients to a hospital.

EMTs and paramedics also take patients from one medical facility to another. Some patients may need to be transferred to a hospital that specializes in treating their injury or illness or to a facility that provides long-term care, such as a nursing home.

If a patient has a contagious disease, EMTs and paramedics decontaminate the interior of the ambulance and may need to report these cases to the proper authorities.

The specific responsibilities of EMTs and paramedics depend on their level of training and the state they work in. The [National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians](#) (NREMT) provides national certification of EMTs and paramedics at four levels: EMT-Basic, EMT-Intermediate (which has two levels, respectively called 1985 and 1999), and Paramedic. Some states, however, have their own certification programs and use different titles.

An **EMT-Basic**, also known as an EMT, cares for patients at the scene and while taking patients by ambulance to a hospital. An EMT-Basic has the emergency skills to assess a patient's condition and manage respiratory, cardiac, and trauma emergencies.

An **EMT-Intermediate (1985 or 1999)**, also known as Advanced EMT, has completed the training required at the EMT-Basic level, as well as training for more advanced skills, such as the use of intravenous fluids and some medications.

Paramedics provide more extensive prehospital care than do EMTs. In addition to carrying out the procedures that EMTs use, paramedics can give medications orally and intravenously, interpret electrocardiograms (EKGs)—used to monitor heart function—and use other monitors and complex equipment.

The specific tasks or procedures EMTs and paramedics are allowed to perform at any level vary by state.

Work Environment

EMTs and paramedics care for sick or injured patients in a pre-hospital setting.

Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics held about 226,500 jobs in 2010. They work both indoors and outdoors, in all types of weather. Their work is physically strenuous and can be stressful, sometimes involving life-or-death situations and patients who are suffering. Most career EMTs and paramedics work in metropolitan areas. Volunteer EMTs and paramedics are more common in small cities, towns, and rural areas. These individuals volunteer for fire departments, providers of emergency medical services, or hospitals and may respond to only a few calls per month.

As shown below, almost half of paid EMTs and paramedics worked as employees of ambulance services in 2010. Others worked in hospitals or local government:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Ambulance services | 48% |
| Local government, excluding education and hospitals | 29 |
| Hospitals; state, local, and private | 17 |

In 2010, about 22 percent of EMTs and paramedics belonged to a union or were covered by a union contract.

Injuries

EMTs and paramedics experience a much larger than average number of work-related injuries or illnesses. They are required to do considerable kneeling, bending, and lifting while caring for and moving patients. They may be exposed to contagious diseases, such as hepatitis B and AIDS. Sometimes they can be injured by mentally unstable or combative patients. These risks can be reduced by following proper safety procedures, such as waiting for police to clear an area in violent situations or wearing gloves while working with a patient.

Work Schedules

Most EMTs and paramedics work full time. About one-third worked more than full time in 2010. Because EMTs and paramedics must be available to work in emergencies, they may work overnight and on weekends. Some EMTs and paramedics are volunteers and have varied work schedules.

How to Become an EMT or Paramedic

EMTs and paramedics need to be physically fit as their job requires a considerable amount of bending, lifting, and kneeling.

All emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics must complete a formal training program. All states require EMTs and paramedics to be licensed; requirements vary by state.

Education and Training

Both a high school diploma or equivalent and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification are

prerequisites for most formal education and training programs. High school students interested in entering these occupations should take courses in anatomy and physiology. Formal training is offered by technical institutes, community colleges, and facilities that specialize in emergency care training.

At the *EMT-Basic* level, training includes instruction in assessing patients' conditions, dealing with trauma and cardiac emergencies, clearing obstructed airways, using field equipment, and handling emergencies. Formal courses include about 100 hours of specialized training. Some training may be required in a hospital or ambulance setting.

The *EMT-Intermediate 1985* or *EMT-Intermediate 1999* level, also known as the *Advanced EMT* level, typically requires 1,000 hours of training based on the scope of practice. At this level, people must complete the training required at the EMT level, as well as more advanced training, such as training in the use of complex airway devices, intravenous fluids, and some medications.

Paramedics have the most advanced level of training. They must complete EMT-level and Advanced EMT training, as well as training in advanced medical skills. Community colleges and technical schools may offer this training, in which graduates may receive an associate's degree. Paramedic programs require about 1,300 hours of training and may take up to 2 years. Their broader scope of practice may include stitching wounds or administering IV medications.

Separate training and licensure is required to drive an ambulance. Although some emergency medical services hire separate drivers, most EMTs and paramedics take a course requiring about 8 hours of training before they can drive an ambulance.

Licenses and Certification

The [National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians](#) (NREMT) certifies EMTs and paramedics. All levels of NREMT certification require completing a certified training or education program and passing the national exam. The national exam has both a written part and a practical part.

All states require EMTs and paramedics to be licensed; requirements vary by state. In most states, an individual who has NREMT certification qualifies for licensure; in some, passing an equivalent state exam is required. Typically to apply for a license, an applicant must be over the age of 18. Many states require background checks and may decide not to give a license to an applicant who has a criminal history.

Important Qualities

Compassion. EMTs and paramedics must provide emotional support to patients in an emergency, especially patients who are in life-threatening situations or extreme mental distress.

Interpersonal skills. EMTs and paramedics almost always work on teams and must be able to coordinate their activities closely with others in stressful situations.

Listening skills. EMTs and paramedics need to listen to patients to determine the extent of their injuries or illnesses.

Physical strength. EMTs and paramedics need to be physically fit. Their job requires a lot of bending, lifting, and kneeling.

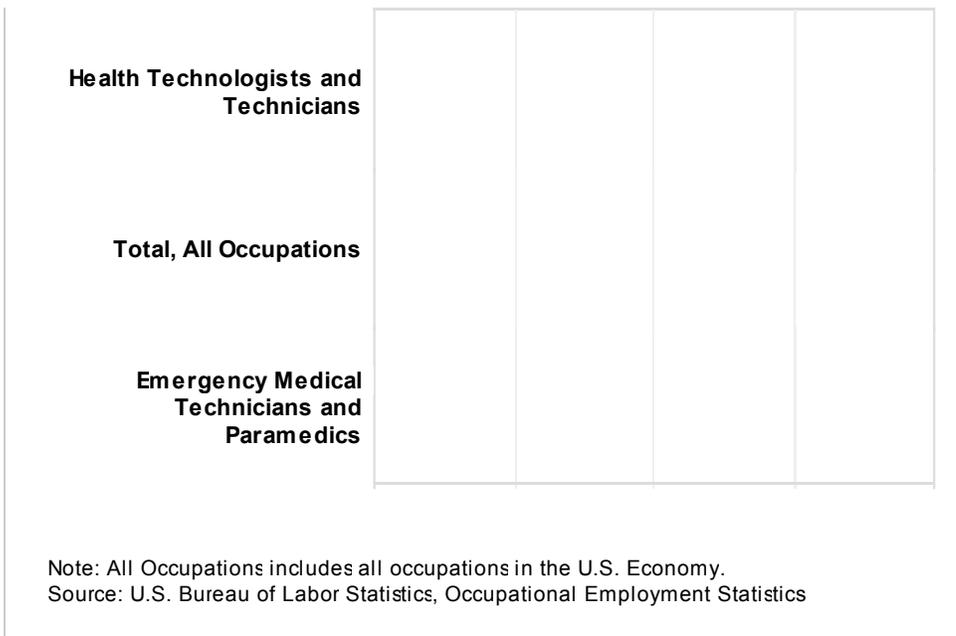
Problem-solving skills. EMTs and paramedics need strong problem-solving skills. They must evaluate patients' symptoms and administer the appropriate treatments.

Speaking skills. EMTs and paramedics need to be able to comfort and explain procedures to the patient, give orders, and relay information to others.

Pay

EMTs and Paramedics

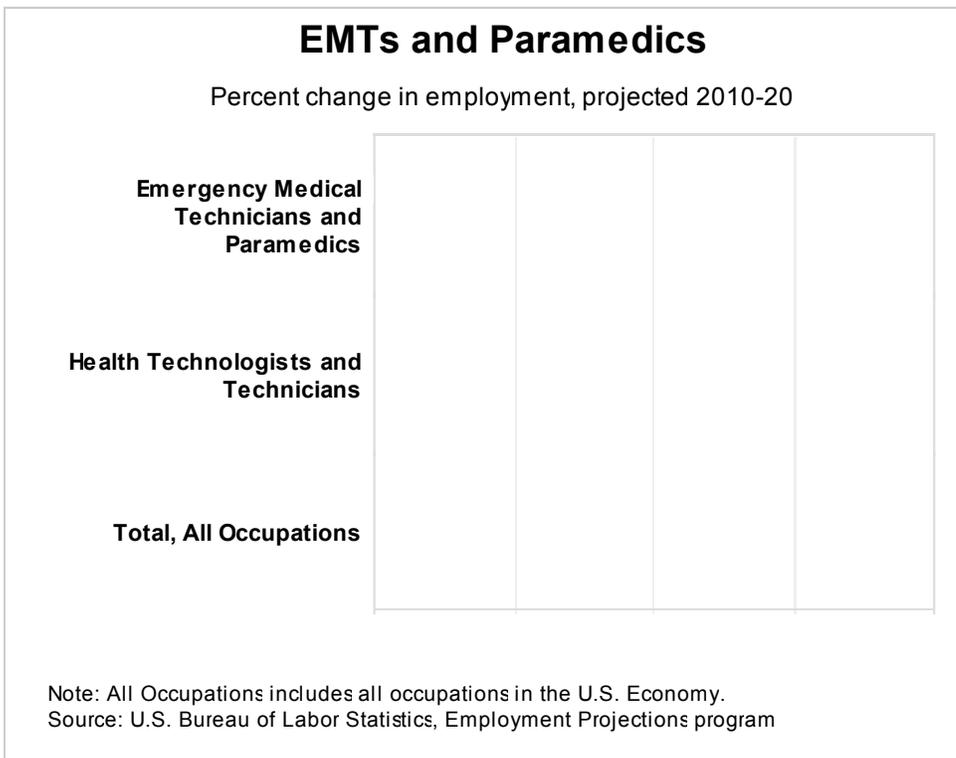
Median annual wages, May 2010



The median annual wage of emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics was \$30,360 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$19,710, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$51,370.

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Job Outlook



Employment of emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics is expected to grow by 33 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for all occupations. Emergencies such as car crashes, natural disasters, and violence will continue to create demand for EMTs and paramedics. There will also continue to be demand for part-time, volunteer EMTs and paramedics in rural areas and smaller metropolitan areas.

Growth in the middle-aged and elderly population will lead to an increase in the number of age-related health emergencies, such as heart attacks or strokes. This, in turn, will lead to an increase in the demand for EMTs and paramedic services. An increase in specialized medical facilities will require more EMTs and paramedics to transfer patients with specific conditions to these facilities for treatment.

In recent years, companies that build ambulances have started to update and redesign their interiors to keep EMTs, paramedics, and patients safer during transport. These companies are hiring EMTs and paramedics as consultants to learn their ideas about such updates and designs.

Employment projections data for EMTs and paramedics, 2010-20

| Occupational Title | SOC Code | Employment, 2010 | Projected Employment, 2020 | Change, 2010-20 | | Employment by Industry |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------|------------------------|
| | | | | Percent | Numeric | |
| Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics | 29-2041 | 226,500 | 301,900 | 33 | 75,400 | [XLS] |

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of EMTs and paramedics.

| OCCUPATION | JOB DUTIES | ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION | 2010 MEDIAN PAY |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Firefighters | Firefighters protect the public by responding to fires and other emergencies. They are frequently the first emergency personnel on the scene of an accident. | Postsecondary non-degree award | \$45,250 |
| Police and Detectives | Police officers protect lives and property. Detectives and criminal investigators, who sometimes are called agents or special agents, gather facts and collect evidence of possible crimes. Law enforcement officers' duties depend on the size and type of their organizations. | High school diploma or equivalent | \$55,010 |
| Air Traffic Controllers | Air traffic controllers coordinate the movement of air traffic to ensure that planes stay safe distances apart. | Associate's degree | \$108,040 |
| | Physician assistants, also known as PAs, practice medicine | | |

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| | <p><u>Physician Assistants</u></p> | <p>under the direction of physicians and surgeons. They are formally trained to examine patients, diagnose injuries and illnesses, and provide treatment.</p> | <p>Master's degree</p> | <p>\$86,410</p> |
| | <p><u>Registered Nurses</u></p> | <p>Registered nurses (RNs) provide and coordinate patient care, educate patients and the public about various health conditions, and provide advice and emotional support to patients and their family members.</p> | <p>Associate's degree</p> | <p>\$64,690</p> |

Contacts for More Information

For more information about emergency medical technicians and paramedics, visit

[National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians](#)

[National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Emergency Medical Services](#)

[National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians](#)

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