Emergency Medical Services (EMS) workers are important to public health and safety. However, work-related injuries present a challenge to EMS worker productivity and retention. Research shows that EMS workers have higher rates of work-related injuries than the general workforce\(^1\)\(^2\) and three times the lost workday rate of all private-industry workers.\(^2\)

Employers need to understand why injuries occur in order to prevent them. Fewer injuries can result in a healthier workforce and decreased costs to the agency. This fact sheet highlights results from a four-year study capturing data from EMS workers treated in emergency departments\(^1\) and provides recommendations for prevention.

More than **22,000 EMS workers** visited emergency departments each year for work-related injuries.\(^1\)\(^3\)

### Who had the most injuries?
- Workers with less than 10 years’ experience
- Full-time workers

### What types of injuries occurred most?
- **Sprains/strains**
  - Most sprains and strains occurred to the back and neck.

### When did injuries occur?
- Most were injured while responding to a 9-1-1 call
- **Response includes patient care and transport.**

### How did injuries occur?
- **Body motion** (e.g., excessive physical effort, awkward posture, or repetitive movement):
  - 6,000 injured workers per year
- **Exposures to harmful substances** (e.g., exposure to blood or respiratory secretions):
  - 6,000 injured workers per year
- **Slips, trips, and falls:**
  - 4,000 injured workers per year
- **Motor vehicle incidents** (e.g., sudden stops, swerves, and crashes):
  - 2,000 injured workers per year
- **Violence/assaults:**
  - 2,000 injured workers per year
## Employers: What can employers do to prevent workplace injuries and exposures?

- **Protect workers and promote safety, health, and well-being through workplace policies, programs and activities.**
  - Create a work environment supporting exercise, healthy diet, and good sleep habits.
  - Provide access to mental health services and support use of these services.

- **Promote safe patient-handling techniques.**
  - Provide safe patient handling equipment.
  - Train and encourage workers to use available on-scene resources (e.g., equipment and additional persons).
  - Teach workers proper lift and transport techniques (e.g., good body mechanics and communication).

- **Protect workers from exposures to blood and other potentially infectious body fluids.**
  - Implement and maintain a comprehensive exposure control plan to address standard precautions, work practice controls, engineering controls, decontamination procedures, waste disposal, etc., as specified in OSHA’s Bloodborne Pathogens Standard.
  - Provide PPE to allow workers to follow standard precautions.

- **Prevent slips, trips, and falls.**
  - Educate workers on ways to identify and reduce fall risks (e.g., be aware of the environment and adjust path to patient if hazards are present).
  - Set policies requiring workers to wear durable, slip-resistant footwear.

- **Improve motor vehicle safety.**
  - Require the use of occupant restraints (e.g., seat belts) in ambulances, including in the patient compartment.
  - Prohibit texting, use of handheld phones, and manual data input while driving.
  - Provide emergency vehicle operator training and complete periodic motor vehicle record checks for drivers.
  - Secure equipment in the patient compartment and driver’s cab of all ambulances.

- **Prevent violence by patients.**
  - Establish a program and set policies to prevent workplace violence.
  - Provide risk management, de-escalation, and self-defense training to reduce the risk for violence.

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3. These data were collected from July 2010–June 2014. The numbers presented in this fact sheet are based on a sample and subject to sampling error.

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For resources related to EMS injury prevention, visit [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ems/othlinks.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ems/othlinks.html).

For more about Federal initiatives related to EMS workers, visit [www.ems.gov](http://www.ems.gov).