

Proposed Title: Reduction of Red Lights and Siren Responses to 911 Calls for Improved Safety in EMS

Subcommittee: Professional Safety Subcommittee

1. Describe the PROBLEM that the advisory is attempting to address
 - The advisory will address the safety risks and limited clinical benefit associated with routine use of lights and sirens (L&S) during EMS responses to 911 calls. Numerous studies have demonstrated that L&S responses significantly increase the risk of ambulance crashes, injuries, and fatalities for EMS clinicians, patients, and the public. Despite these risks, many EMS systems historically default to emergency driving for a large proportion of calls, even when the patient's condition does not require immediate time-critical intervention. Evidence also suggests that in most medical emergencies, L&S transport results in only minimal reductions in response or transport times, often measured in seconds to a few minutes, with little measurable impact on patient outcomes. The advisory will seek to address the mismatch between the risks of emergency driving and the limited clinical benefit for many call types.
2. What is the end goal of the advisory and its associated recommendation(s)?
 - The end goal will be to improve patient, provider, and public safety by reducing unnecessary emergency vehicle operations while maintaining timely response for truly time-critical emergencies. The advisory will encourage Arkansas EMS agencies to evaluate their dispatch practices, response protocols, and operational culture to identify opportunities to safely reduce L&S responses. This includes implementing evidence-based dispatch prioritization systems, protocol-driven response modes, and ongoing monitoring of L&S utilization as a quality and safety metric.
3. What action will you be asking the target audience (i.e. State Legislature, Secretary of Health, Board of Health, Section of EMS, etc) take and is it in their statutory authority to take action?
 - The advisory will request that the Arkansas Department of Health, Section of EMS, and EMS system leaders encourage or support statewide evaluation of emergency response driving practices and promote reduction of unnecessary lights-and-siren responses. This may include developing guidance, educational resources, or quality improvement expectations related to emergency vehicle operations. These actions are within the purview of the state EMS regulatory and oversight structure, which is responsible for promoting safe EMS practices and supporting statewide quality improvement initiatives.

4. Is the action within the target audience’s regulatory authority (Yes or No)? If no, what is the proposed solution to achieve the targeted recommendations?
 - Yes. The Arkansas Department of Health Section of EMS has authority to provide guidance, encourage quality improvement initiatives, and establish best practice recommendations for EMS agencies operating within the state. While individual EMS agencies maintain operational control of their response protocols, the state can promote evidence-based practices and safety initiatives through advisories, training guidance, and integration into EMS quality improvement frameworks.

5. Does federal or state guidance already exist for this topic? If so, is there a gap in the guidance provided for EMS? Will this advisory assist in closing that gap?
 - Yes. National EMS organizations, including the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP) and the National Association of EMTs (NAEMT), along with 11 others, have published joint [position statements](#) and safety guidance supporting the reduction of unnecessary lights-and-siren responses due to the increased crash risk and limited time savings associated with emergency driving. However, while these national recommendations exist, there may not be consistent statewide guidance or expectations in Arkansas encouraging EMS agencies to measure and reduce L&S utilization. This advisory will help bridge that gap by translating national safety recommendations into a statewide quality improvement focus and encouraging agencies to examine their local response practices using evidence-based principles.

References:

1. Kupas, D. F., Zavadsky, M., Burton, B., Baird, S., Clawson, J., Decker, C., Dworsky, P., Evans, B., Finger, D., Goodloe, J. M., LaCroix, B., Ludwig, G., McEvoy, M., Tan, D., Thornton, K. L., Smith, K., & Wilson, B. R. (2023). *Joint statement on lights & siren vehicle operations on emergency medical services (EMS) responses*. *International Journal of Paramedicine*, (1). <https://doi.org/10.56068/IXNL6559>