

Conclusion

Blue Care is committed to furthering the development of initiatives that add value to current strategies. The future direction in road safety will be exciting and challenging as Blue Care looks to enhancing the use of data, introducing new technologies and developing new training methods to further

reduce the incidence of road crashes. The lessons learned in the delivery of this road safety program may inform similar organisations. Through continued engagement and input of internal and external stakeholders, Blue Care will continue to take a leadership role in the delivery of road safety.

Helping the helpers: The role of EMSPA in paramedic practice

by Ben Goodwin, State Liaison Officer, Emergency Medical Service Protection Association (Queensland)

Danger is the first step in the analysis of a critical situation. Paramedics have this entrenched in them from the first day of their education with the acronym 'Dr. ABC' applied in the systematic assessment of almost all patients. The theoretical knowledge and awareness of potential hazards is an essential element in the training and day-to-day practice of a paramedic. It stands to reason, though, that while paramedics are immersed in such a dynamic work environment, recognising dangers and then taking steps to avoid harm can be an art as much as a science.

There are multiple policies and procedures in place in an attempt to keep paramedics safe; however, new dangers arise and inevitably injuries occur. The Emergency Medical Service Protection Association (EMSPA) is an organisation that was founded by front-line paramedics for the support of ambulance service personnel. EMSPA is constantly engaged in communication with paramedics across Australia, assisting them with legal and workplace issues. As a non-politically aligned, democratic association, we are solely focused on giving essential support to members and improving work conditions for all emergency medical service personnel.

EMSPA currently represents over 1600 paramedics and, as an organisation driven from the ground up, is constantly seeking ways to improve the health and safety of ambulance service personnel. One of the most visible and also most dangerous aspects of a paramedic's profession is the rapid response to an emergency situation. While most patients will be inside a dwelling, the dynamics of this line of work is exemplified by the attendance at a road traffic accident.

The health and safety of paramedics attending a road traffic accident is a multi-faceted issue. The EMSPA liaison network has given support to paramedics for many incidents that have unfortunately not gone according to plan. These situations typically arise due to the number of uncertainties that are inevitable when working in the field. EMSPA has received feedback from concerned or affected members about issues that have occurred while they are involved in the following activities:

- Driving with lights and sirens on through traffic
- Dealing with potentially irate patients or bystanders

- Attending an accident with other vehicles driving quickly past or causing another accident from slowing down and showing too much interest
- Manually handling patients and equipment
- Using sharps and pharmacological agents in an uncontrolled or dangerous environment.

The situations mentioned above have all been raised by EMSPA members but are by no means the only issues confronting paramedics. The scope of the concerns raised, however, does provide some insight into the diverse nature of hazards for ambulance service personnel.

Psychological issues affect many paramedics, and there are support organisations within many of the services throughout Australia. Every call-out is different, and the multitude of possibilities that necessarily runs through the minds of paramedics in an attempt to consider possible injuries, other resources or services that may be required and the most appropriate medical facility for casualties must be dealt with before arriving at the scene of the accident.

Fatalities and serious injuries have enormous impact on all people present, and debriefing is performed informally between colleagues and, if needed, formally by support networks developed by employers. EMSPA members are directed to the independent counselling service provided for free by the association for any psychological complaints. If they just want someone to talk to, they can contact their EMSPA Regional Liaison Officer, as there is often no one better placed to offer support than a fellow paramedic.

The altruistic nature of the ambulance profession implies that the well-being of front-line staff is not always their highest priority, and this is most clearly evident in an actual emergency situation, such as a road traffic crash (RTC), where lives are at stake. Different services throughout Australia have different driver training regimes for new paramedics. While some states have intensive five-day courses followed by on-road supervised driving and mentoring, other states have a briefer introduction to 'code 1' or 'hot response' driving. Most states have legislative provisions that provide drivers of emergency vehicles with

exemptions under the road rules to enable rapid response without undue repercussions; however, paramedics can be charged with dangerous or negligent driving. The law explains that during the emergency response, it is a paramedic's duty to operate the vehicle with reasonable care, and to be exempt from the law, it must also be reasonable that the relevant road rule should not apply.

It is undoubtedly difficult to prepare a person to drive under lights and sirens while on the way to a potentially life-threatening injury or illness but it is always a paramedic's first priority to arrive safely at the scene in the quickest possible time. If, unfortunately, an accident does occur, EMSPA members are advised to comply with their employer's requirements and also to contact their EMSPA Regional Liaison Officer for support, advice and possible legal representation.

Manual handling is an important issue raised by many EMSPA members when treating and transporting patients. At the scene

of an RTC, this occurs when moving and/or lifting a patient out of a vehicle onto a stretcher and also, on occasion, when lifting the patient from the ground onto a stretcher. Once the patient is on the stretcher, the loading of a stretcher into the vehicle is another manual handling area that potentially causes injury.

Any injuries sustained by a paramedic should be recorded according to the employer's policy, and an EMSPA liaison officer should also be contacted. When a liaison officer is contacted, EMSPA is able to give the support required and monitor trends in workplace incidents, as well as provide vital legal support during the WorkCover process where required.

This monitoring has, in the past, resulted in EMSPA contacting ambulance service management about workplace health and safety issues. EMSPA has petitioned and lobbied ambulance service management to have recurring 'near misses' or potential hazards examined with the goal of changing paramedic practice for the better.

Motor transport and traffic safety in Australian agriculture: A review

by L Fragar and T Lower, Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety, University of Sydney, Moree

Abstract

In rural communities, motor transport features as a leading cause of on-farm fatalities. The most common agents of injury are quad bikes, farm utilities and two-wheeled motorcycles. This paper describes the current status of knowledge and action in safety associated with on-farm motor vehicle transport, and provides recommendations to reduce this injury burden.

While farm transport has benefited from improvements in design features associated with on-road vehicles, there are specific design approaches that will further enhance safety – for example, minimising the potential for crush injuries from quad bike rollovers. Additionally, as farmers and farm managers are responsible for health and safety in farm work settings, ensuring maintenance of farm roads and laneways, and enforcing compliance with rules relating to speed, passengers and helmet use, will all be important. The road safety industry can play an important role in assisting the small and generally family-based farming businesses to adopt these approaches.

Keywords

Farm vehicle, Farm injury, Farm safety

Introduction

Motor vehicle safety research and initiatives have focused largely on reducing the human and societal toll associated with vehicle use on public roads and highways. The high rate of road traffic deaths of rural relative to urban populations has been well

recognised and explored both internationally (for example, [1]) and in Australia [2-4]. In relation to off-road motor transport safety, the focus of attention has been drawn to driveway deaths of children [5-7], and to deaths and serious injury associated with quad bike deaths of children and adults in a range of settings [8].

The problem of traumatic deaths and serious injury on farms due to a variety of different agents of injury is well recognised internationally and in Australia [9]. However, initiatives to improve safety associated with motor vehicle use in agriculture has been limited to improving quad bike safety on farms and, in North America, to risks associated with driving slow-moving farm 'vehicles' on roads [10, 11]. Little attention has been given to the whole issue of on-farm traffic and the interaction between the wide range of motor vehicles and mobile plant.

Most vehicles that are used to transport people and goods on farms are also used on public roads, quad bikes being the key exception. Similarly, items of mobile plant used in agricultural production are sometimes driven on roads between farms. From a user perspective then, both on- and off-farm (or on- and off-road) safety should not be ignored in any serious attempts to improve safety, whether opportunities be in terms of improvement in vehicle characteristics, in operating environments or in human behaviour.

This paper aims to describe the current status of knowledge and action in safety associated with on-farm ground transport vehicles on Australian farms, and recommends action that should be initiated to reduce the burden of injury.