

AMBULANCES IN INDIA: LIFESAVERS ON WHEELS

An ambulance is a specially designed and equipped vehicle that provides first aid, stabilization, and timely transportation for sick, seriously ill, or injured people during emergencies to healthcare facilities, for inter-hospital transfers, and for pre-hospital emergency care.

Licences to operate ambulances are issued under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989. The National Ambulance Code, 2013 was incorporated under the rules in 2016, and it designated four types of road ambulances.



Medical First Responder ambulance is permitted only to transfer patients, and patients cannot be treated inside the vehicle.


Patient Transport Vehicle is equipped with basic nursing equipment and first aid facilities, and is used to transfer non-emergency patients between healthcare facilities or their residences. These vehicles are suitable for those who require constant clinical monitoring on the way to the hospital, but their needs may not be time-critical.

Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance transfers, monitors, and provides pre-hospital care to emergency patients requiring non-invasive airway management and oxygen support.

Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance transfers, monitors, and provides pre-hospital care to critical patients requiring invasive airway management and oxygen support. These ambulances specialize in transporting paediatric emergencies, cardiac cases, and road traffic accident patients.

Requirements in an Ambulance

The Central Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Rules, 2016, stipulate that all vehicles running as ambulances after 1 April 2018, are required to adhere to the National Ambulance Code.

- Exterior body is required to be in white colour, including the front, rear and side bumpers.
- Essential to display the word '**AMBULANCE**' (7:1 length to height size ratio) and the Star of Life symbol  (size 40cm x 40cm).

- The word **'AMBULANCE'** needs to be written in contrast to the background colour.
 - On the sides, **'AMBULANCE'** needs to be written in **red** on a white background.
 - On the front and rear required to display **'AMBULANCE'** in **red** on a **yellow** background
- Ambulance calling number (size 40cm x 75cm) is required to be displayed on the sides and rear end of the vehicle.
- Symbols or line markings on the front, rear and sides of the ambulance need to be in **red**.
- **'AMBULANCE'** needs to be written in reverse **AMBULANCE** on the front to make it easy for other vehicle drivers to identify it.
- Markings of government and private operators needs to be smaller than the word **'AMBULANCE'** on the vehicle.
- Sirens and flasher lights are required to be used when the ambulance is responding to an emergency call and transporting a patient.
- Medical First Responders and Patient Transport ambulances are required to have blue color flasher fitted on the top of the vehicle.
- Basic Life Support and Advanced Life Support ambulances are required to have blue and red warning lights fitted in a rectangular pattern to the horizontal ground on sides of the vehicle and two lights fitted in the lower middle windshield.

FRONT END



SIDE VIEW



REAR END



- In all four types of ambulances, sirens are required to be fitted on front of the vehicle.
- When the sirens and flasher lights are on, ambulances have right of way over all other vehicles on the road.
- It is necessary to have a location tracking facility installed in the ambulance.
- Patient Transport Vehicle ambulances are required to have two seats for patient and attendant; Basic Life Support and Advanced Life Support ambulances are required to have four seats.
- For fire safety, all interior materials of an ambulance are required to adhere to flammability standards*.
- Air conditioning and heating requirements are optional in all ambulances except in Advanced Life Support ambulances.

**As per the National Ambulance Code, the flammability requirements specified in IS: 15061, as notified under the Central Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Rules, 2016.*

Medical Equipment

As per the National Ambulance Code*, the following medical equipment are required to have as per the type of ambulance.

Patient Transport Vehicles, Basic Life Support & Advanced Life Support ambulances are required to have	In addition to medical equipment in Patient Transport Vehicles, the Basic Life Support & Advanced Life Support ambulances are required to have	In addition to medical equipment in Basic Life Support ambulances, the Advanced Life Support ambulances are required to have
portable oxygen cylinder, portable – manual suction aspirator, resuscitation kit, first aid box, cotton, bandages, blankets, vacuum mattresses, sphygmomanometer, stethoscope, personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, gowns and eye shields), stretcher and undercarriage, nursing material for wounds, burns and corrosives, waste bag and vomiting bag.	head/ spinal immobilization board, upper/ lower extremity traction devices, cervical collar set, stationary oxygen, oxygen inlet, oxygen reservoir, masks and airways for all ages, electric portable suction aspirator with airflow, injections set, infusions set, intubation sets, diagnostic light, nebulization apparatus, emergency delivery kit, personal protection equipment against infection, safety shoes and helmet.	defibrillators with rhythm and patient data recording, cardiac monitor, external cardiac pacing, portable advanced resuscitation system (infusion equipment, infusion administration sets, infusion solutions, adhesive fixing materials, intubation equipment, magill forceps, insertion stylets, endotracheal tubes with connectors, inflation tube clamp, inflation syringe, tube fixing material, stethoscope, drug administration equipment), thorax drainage kit, volumetric infusion device, central vein catheters, requirements for emergency and transport ventilators.

*Automotive Industry Standard: Constructional and Functional Requirements for Road Ambulances (National Ambulance Code), 2013. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India.

In addition to the above, it is advised to have, as per the type of ambulance, portable electrocardiogram, defibrillator and AMBU bag, haemostatics, blankets for hypothermia/drowning cases, obstetric kits to have gloves, scissors or surgical blades, umbilical cord clamps, umbilical tapes, dressings, towels, perinatal pad, bulb syringe, bulb suction, baby receiving trays, warmer, thermal absorbent blankets, head covers, heat-reflective material, delivery bundles, and firefighting equipment.

↳ Depending on the needs of the state or district or healthcare facility, other medical equipment may be included in ambulances, in addition to those listed above.

Medicines and Consumables

The medicines and consumables available in an ambulance are based on the services provided and type of ambulance, these need to be recommended as per the direction of the Health Departments of State governments or hospitals.

*As per the National Ambulance Code notified under the Central Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Rules, 2016.

Personnel

- All ambulances are required to have Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) and a driver.
- Under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, the Indian Public Health Standards recommend one driver with two Emergency Medical Technicians for every ambulance positioned in a district hospital [1].
- The emergency medical technicians needs to be trained in basic emergency care skills, such as oxygen therapy, physical examination, measure blood pressure and other vitals, assisting emergency childbirth and newborn care, automated external defibrillation, airway maintenance, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, maintaining ventilatory support during transportation, spinal immobilization, bleeding control, and fracture management. They also need to be trained for administration of medicines but only under the medical direction of doctor over radio/phone [2].

[1] Indian Public Health Standards are a set of uniform standards recommended for public healthcare facilities in order to improve the quality of healthcare delivery.

[2] Short term training Curriculum Handbook: Emergency Medical Technician – Basic (2017). Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Calling for an Ambulance

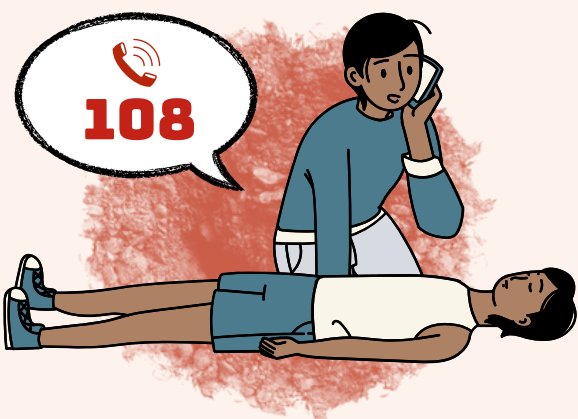
DIAL 108 for an ambulance to transfer patient to a hospital.

DIAL 102 for an ambulance to transfer a pregnant woman or new-born to a hospital*.

DIAL 112 for assistance from the police, fire and rescue, ambulance, or any other emergency service.

DIAL 1033 for an ambulance of the National Highway Authority of India for road traffic accidents occurring on a National highway.

Ambulances owned by local government departments, charitable institutions, private organisations, private hospitals, and non-governmental organisations could have different calling numbers.



**Dial 102 number is being used in some states, such as Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Sikkim, etc., for an ambulance to transfer a pregnant woman or newborn to a hospital, in addition to Dial 108 ambulance service.*

Payment

- 108 and 102 ambulance services are free to users under the National Health Mission, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare when transporting to public healthcare facilities however if the patient is transported to a private health facility, charges may apply and rates are fixed by concerned States.
- Pregnant women are entitled to free ambulance service for delivery in a public hospital under government programmes like Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram*.
- 1033 ambulance services of the National Highway Authority of India are available free for road traffic accident patients.
- The Regional Transport Offices of State governments needs to fix the transportation costs for private ambulances, under Section 67 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and as per the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, private ambulance providers cannot charge above the fixed transportation cost set by the relevant State government.
- Some States have schemes wherein free cashless hospitalization for patients of road traffic accidents are provided.
- Some private health insurance companies cover patient transportation costs; this coverage may be a part of insurance plan or an add-on emergency ambulance/transportation cover.
- Bills are required to be issued by ambulance service providers to users where payment is made.

**Initiatives for Pregnant Women. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1843841>*

Duties of Citizens & Authorities

- Anyone failing to allow free passage to an ambulance is subject to imprisonment for a term that may extend to six months, or a fine of Rs. 10,000, or both, as per the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- Any person who saves the life of a road traffic accident victim within the 'golden hour' is eligible to receive a certificate of appreciation and a cash reward of Indian Rs. 5000, as per the Good Samaritan Scheme of the Government of India*.
- Any person who helps in the hospital transfer of an accident victim is not required to provide personal information or pay for the injured person's treatment.
- The Regional Transport Authority's inspecting authority need to inspect the vehicle physically at their office before granting the registration.
- The owner, the authority at the hospital, district and state level need to conduct periodic quality checks of registration of ambulance vehicles, medical equipment, medicines, consumables, personnel and their training, and adherence to the National Ambulance Code.

**A Good Samaritan is a person who provides emergency assistance to an accident victim or arranges for their transportation to a hospital in good faith, voluntarily, and without any expectation of payment.*

In Case of Grievances

Government ambulance (108/102)

- Patients/users can file a complaint with the specific State's Grievance Redressal Cell, under the Department of Health & Family Welfare, regarding the unavailability of a 108 or 102 ambulance, not coming on time, being understaffed or overcharging.
- Patients/users can file a complaint by calling the landline number of the specific State's Grievance Redressal Cell or by sending an email to the Grievance Redressal Officer nominated by the State government.
- Patients can also file a complaint with the Public Grievance Officer of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, New Delhi.

<https://main.mohfw.gov.in/Contact-Us/public-grievance-officer-details>

Private ambulance

- The owner of an ambulance (in whose name the vehicle is registered at the Regional Transport Authority) or operator or service provider is accountable for adhering to the National Ambulance Code standards and ensuring all facilities are available as per their contract with the relevant State government.
- In case of private ambulances, complaints regarding undue delay, non-arrival, non-availability of ambulance and deficiency of facilities, such as medical equipment, medicines, staff, or the conduct, are to be made to the owner of the ambulance services.
- Users have the right to complain through the appropriate District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission and claim compensation from the ambulance operator, as per the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
 - National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, <http://ncdrc.nic.in>
 - National Consumer Helpline portal, <https://consumerhelpline.gov.in/>
<https://consumerhelpline.gov.in/user/>

For any ambulance

- Patients and users have the right to complain through the appropriate District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission and claim compensation from the ambulance operator, as per the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
<https://consumeraffairs.nic.in/acts-and-rules/consumer-protection>

Useful Links

Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, <https://www.hstp.org.in/hstpsearch/uploads/docs/motor-vehicles-act-1988.pdf>

Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, <https://www.hstp.org.in/hstpsearch/uploads/docs/central-motor-vehicle-rules-1989.pdf>

Automotive Industry Standard: Constructional and Functional Requirements for Road Ambulances (National Ambulance Code) 2013. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India.
http://www.nisc.gov.in/PDF/AIS_125.pdf



This pamphlet provides information on ambulance services, including necessary medical equipment, medicines, consumables, and personnel. It also offers information on how to access ambulance services and whom to contact in case of grievances.

<https://www.hstp.org.in/>

This pamphlet has been developed by Dr. Sonali Randhawa and Mr. Sunil Nandraj from the Health Systems Transformation Platform with contributions from Mr. Pranay Lal, Dr. Suresh K Mohammed, Dr. Paul P Francis, Dr. N Devadasan, Mr. Venkat Changavalli, Dr. Punam B, Mr. Vineet Chawdhry, Mr. Rajeev Sadanandan, Dr. Kamala Rammohan, Dr. Rekha Ravindran, Dr. Dileep Kumar SR, Ms. Anagha Khot, Dr. Sudha Chandrashekar, Ms. Rasika T Birewar and Ms. Meghana Narendran. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact us at hstp@hstp.org.in