PHILOSOPHY OF VEHICLE OPERATION

"Speed does not save lives. It is the trained ambulance crew who arrives safely at the patient and is prepared to render pre-hospital care that prolongs life. You are the eyes, ears and hands of the physician at the patient’s location. You are trained to provide medical care, treatment and transportation to the public. You have accepted the responsibility to arrive safely and efficiently, with the skills and training to identify and treat the medical needs of the patient, with professional care, treatment, service and the safe delivery of the patient to the appropriate medical treatment facility.”

Vehicle Use

All Mid Georgia Ambulance vehicles shall only be operated by persons authorized to operate such a vehicle. At no time will any Mid Georgia Ambulance associate operate any vehicle they are not qualified or authorized to operate.

To qualify to operate a vehicle owned by Mid Georgia Ambulance an associate must:

1. Maintain an acceptable driving record:

   - The determination of what constitutes an “acceptable” driving record is decided by Mid Georgia Ambulance’s Insurance carrier on a case by case basis.
   - Each associate is required to submit a 7-year MVR upon hire and is subject to annual rechecks.
   - It is the responsibility of the associate to report any changes in their MVR Human Resources.

2. Complete On-Line Defensive Driving Course provided by Mid Georgia Ambulance.

3. Complete Drivers Training upon hire which at a minimum will include:

   - Initial “Classroom” training. This covers safe operations and policies.
• Initial driving instruction under the close supervision on an FTO.
• Initial evaluation by the FTO at the end of the orientation process*.
  *There is no standard hands-on driving “exam”. The FTO will monitor the associates
  driving behavior to determine if the associate is compliant with all laws and policies and
  is able to operate the vehicle safely. There is a written exam.

4. Obtain an acceptable recommendation from the FTO after hire before being released to drive
   unsupervised.
5. Complete the Annual Driver’s Skill Review each year after date of hire.
6. Complete any Remedial Drivers Training required. The determination for remedial driver’s
   training is made by the Operations Manager or President on the recommendation of the
   Director of Clinical Education & Performance Improvement. The Director of Clinical
   Education & Performance Improvement will determine the specifics of the remedial training
   on a case-by-case basis depending on the reason for the recommendation. All reports of
   Vehicle Policy Use violations or reports of skill deficiency should be made in the ePro
   system and are investigated.

Vehicle Operations

In addition to strictly adhering to the Law of Due Regard (*Georgia Uniform Rules of the Road
40-6-6*) the following standards must be followed at all times while operating a vehicle owned by
Mid Georgia Ambulance*:

**Non-emergency driving**

• The posted speed limit will always be followed. MGA associates shall not operate or
  drive any company vehicle at a speed that is unsafe for the road conditions, amount of
  traffic, weather, or unsafe for the patient’s condition.
• All traffic laws will be obeyed.
• Mid Georgia Ambulance vehicles will always be driven in a safe manner that is
courteous to other drivers.

**Emergency-Driving**

• Lights and sirens will only be used in the following circumstances:
  o The unit is responding to a call having a priority of 1, 2, or as advised by CMED.
  o The unit is transporting to a receiving facility and the patient has a life/limb-
    threatening condition as determined by the most senior provider on board.
• Lights and sirens will always be used together. When possible both sirens should be
  used.
• MGA associates shall activate the "yelp" position of the siren a minimum of one hundred and fifty feet prior to any controlled intersection
• The vehicle speed shall NEVER exceed 10mph over the posted speed limit. MGA associates shall not operate or drive any company vehicle at a speed that is unsafe for the road conditions, amount of traffic, weather, or unsafe for the patient’s condition.
• When possible, passing should be done on the left-hand side. This is because drivers are instructed to pull to the right for emergency vehicles.
• The vehicle shall ALWAYS come to a complete ("3-rock") stop at all red lights and stop signs and look left, forward, right and left again before starting through an intersection or when turn lanes to your left and right are occupied.

General Vehicle Operations Mandates

Safety Restraint Use

• All vehicle occupants must be restrained by seatbelts when driving or riding as a passenger while the vehicle is in motion. The only exception to this applies to occupants engaged in emergency care that makes seat belt use impractical.
• Patients and non-associate passengers not providing medical care must always be restrained.
• Children under the age of 12 are not permitted to ride in the cab (front seat) of the ambulance because of air-bag hazards. In the event a specific vehicle has a warning label (found on the passenger side sun visor) indicating a different age or other requirement the guidelines provided by the vehicle’s manufacturer will be followed.
• Infants and toddlers should always be transported in an approved child safety seat (car seat) unless their medical condition makes this impractical. Children should never be transported on the lap of an adult. In the event there are more children (who are not patients) than can be properly restrained in the ambulance the crew should seek assistance from CMED or law enforcement.
• MGA associates shall not start to move the vehicle before the location and the route to travel is known.
• All equipment must be properly secured prior to the vehicle being in motion unless emergency patient care prevents a particular piece of equipment from being secured (such as a drug box). Equipment should be secured with the provided cargo-nets, straps, or placed in cabinets or latching exterior compartments.
• MGA associates shall practice defensive driving whenever you are an operator/driver of any MGA vehicle.
• MGA associates shall use your partner for map reading, operating the radio, clearing intersections, looking out for hazardous situations, and spotting when backing the vehicle.
• MGA associates shall use good "common sense" and "think ahead" when operating a patient transport vehicle and keep a distance of at least five seconds between your unit and the vehicle in front of you.
• MGA associates shall not park so that backing is necessary.
• MGA associates shall not drive by any other "mandates".

Vehicle Crashes

• *The safety and well-being of MGA associates and bystanders involved in vehicle accidents is always the most important concern. At no time should patient care be compromised to complete accident documentation.*

• In the event of a vehicle crash the involved EMS crew should:
  o Notify CMED of the accident.
  o If uninjured and able check the condition of everyone involved in the accident.
  o Request additional units as necessary.
  o MGA associates should avoid making any comments regarding factors of the accident unless directly asked by law enforcement.

• In the event of a vehicle crash CMED should:
  o Notify law enforcement of the accident.
  o Notify the appropriate Operations Manager and Field Supervisor. This notification must be made by verbal contact.
  o Dispatch additional units to the scene of the accident as requested.

• In the event of a vehicle crash the Operations Manager/Field Supervisor should:
  o Notify the President. This notification must be made by verbal contact.
  o Respond to the scene of the accident to assist in patient care and post-accident documentation.
  o Ensure an accident report is completed by law enforcement. An accident report must be filled out by law enforcement on all incidents of vehicle contact which results in damage to another person’s property.
  o The Operations Manager/Field Supervisor must photo document all property damage at the time of incident.
  o Ensure all required documentation is complete:
    ▪ First Report of Accident or Injury (paper copy) by each crew member involved.
• Incident Report submitted in ePro by each crew member involved.
• Document the case number provided by law enforcement
• Ensure all involved crew members receive a Urine Drug Screen and Alcohol Breath Test within 24 hours of the accident.
  o Check all documentation for completeness, and then forward it to Human Resources.
  o Conduct an investigation and determine the factors contributing to the vehicle accident. In the event a policy violation is found discipline or remedial training as described in this policy may be administered. Data gathered will also be used to enhance training programs to prevent future incidents.

• In the event of a vehicle crash Human Resources should:
  o Receive all documentation and photos from the Operations Manager.
  o Notify the insurance carrier of the accident and provide any required documents.
  o Presidentrdinate Workers Compensation claims if an associate is injured
  o Create a “hard copy” file of the incident. This is composed of the actual paper documentation and photos. All photos should be stored on a CD-ROM. This file must be stored in a secure, limited-access cabinet.
  o Human Resources will forward any follow up information provided by the insurance company to the President.

Policy Violations

Under normal circumstances the standard 4-tier discipline policy will be used in the event of violations of the Standards for Vehicle Use. However, due to the dangerous and high-risk involved in vehicle operations certain violations may result in increased discipline at the opinion of the Operations Manager and President. In addition certain violations will result in the “Death Penalty” (see policy 100-009) being invoked.

RIGHT TO REQUEST:
MGA reserves the right to request cellular phone records of any and all associates who are involved in any incident occurring in a vehicle owned or maintained by Mid Georgia Ambulance. Failure to comply with this request will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
Use of “Non-Ambulance” Vehicles

Executive Vehicles

These vehicles are for use by certain officers of the corporation and may be used at the discretion of the person to whom the vehicle is assigned. The executive is expected to respond to any Company need, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Maintenance Vehicles

These vehicles are for use by the Fleet Maintenance department and are to be used primarily for Fleet Maintenance purposes. The associate to whom the vehicle is assigned may use it for discretionary personal use, may drive it back and forth from his residence every day and is expected to respond to any Company need, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This vehicle must be driven by a member of the Fleet Maintenance department, or by MGA field personnel with the prior approval of the President.

Response Vehicles

These vehicles are for use by Operations Managers and Field Supervisory personnel. A vehicle assigned to an Operations Manager is expected to be stocked with a specific list of equipment at all times, may be used at the discretion of the person to whom the vehicle is assigned, and the Operations Manager is expected to respond to any Company need, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. This vehicle must be driven by the Operations Manager or by other field personnel with the prior approval of the Operations Manager. This vehicle may be driven back and forth from the Operations Manager’s residence every day. The Operations Manager shall not take the vehicle outside his/her main area of operation without consent of the President. Field Supervisor vehicles are to be used in the area of operation to which they are assigned and shall also be stocked with a specific list of equipment at all times. This vehicle is not for personal use and shall be based at the operation’s main office location. The Field Supervisor vehicle shall be available to respond to any Company need, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Field Supervisor shall not take the vehicle outside his/her main area of operation without consent of the Division Operations Manager.

Pool Vehicles

The Company maintains vehicles for use by Company associates who are conducting approved Company business. These vehicles are garaged at the Macon operation and may be used on a first come, first served basis. Pool vehicles may be checked out by following the approved procedure and must be returned to the garage area immediately upon
completion of Company business. These vehicles shall not be used for personal business, shall not be taken home by any associate without the consent of the President. Any passenger who is not a Company associate must have permission from the President to ride in a Company pool vehicle.

*The standards listed cannot reasonably predict every possible situation that may be encountered while driving. It is always the responsibility of the driver to operate the vehicle in a safe manner.

**Vehicle Cleanliness**

Mid Georgia Ambulance vehicles which are visible to the public will be reasonably clean on the exterior and interior at all times. Minimal standards include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Vehicle exterior free of major dirt or mud
- Vehicle glass free of major dirt or mud
- Vehicle cab free of unreasonable amounts of dust
- Vehicle cab free of garbage
- Vehicle cab free of unreasonable amounts of dirt on the floor
- Patient care compartment free of uncontained bio-hazardous waste
- Patient care compartment free of unreasonable amounts of dirt on the floor
- Patient care compartment free of uncontained garbage

For infection control the vehicle must be cleaned after each patient contact regardless of visible contamination. Minimal standards include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Sheets on stretcher replaced with clean ones
- Stretcher mattress pad and straps wiped with a disinfecting solution
- Garbage must be removed if the garbage container is full
- Bio-hazardous waste, other than sharps if the container is not full, must be removed and disposed of properly
- Any Durable Medical Equipment which has come into contact with the patient, bystanders, or EMS crew must we cleaned according to the Durable Medical Equipment Policy

At least once per week a more detailed cleaning should be performed on each vehicle. The same standards as above apply but more care should be taken to clean out the harder to reach areas and clear them of dust and debris. Bio-hazardous waste must be cleaned immediately before returning to service regardless of the difficulty.
In the instance where a patient with a confirmed or suspected communicable disease is transported the transporting vehicle should be removed from service until the patient care compartment can be thoroughly cleaned. If time does not permit the crew to perform this, the crew should return to service in a different vehicle and notify the on-duty supervisor or Operations Manager. In addition to the above mentioned standards, all surfaces, including all walls and ceiling, should be disinfected with an approved cleaner. Any Durable Medical Equipment which may have been exposed to the patient, bystanders, or EMS crew must also be cleaned according to the Durable Medical Equipment Policy. Any disposable equipment which may have been exposed to the patient, bystanders, or EMS crew must be disposed of properly and replaced.

Vehicle Inspection

Mid Georgia Ambulance uses a “sealed cabinet system” to ensure the vehicle is properly stocked. Due to the unpredictable nature of Emergency Medical Services it is the responsibility of the off-going crew to restock all supplies used in accordance with the Vehicle Check Sheet and then seal the cabinets with a tamper-proof plastic seal. This will provide Mid Georgia Ambulance with a fleet of ambulances ready to use in the event of a disaster or call-volume surge.

Upon beginning a shift, scheduled or unscheduled, the on-coming crew should visually inspect each cabinet to verify that it is sealed in accordance with this policy. Any missing supplies should be replaced prior to starting the shift. In addition, any equipment labeled on the Vehicle Check Sheet as “Critical Equipment” must be visually inspected and tested (if applicable) prior to starting the shift. Durable Medical Equipment should be inspected according to the Durable Medical Equipment Policy. This pre-shift inspection should be documented on the Vehicle Check Sheet which is to be turned in at the end of each month.

Vehicle and Content Security

All Mid Georgia Ambulance vehicles must be secured when the vehicle is unattended. The intention of this policy is to prevent unauthorized access to Mid Georgia Ambulance vehicles and their contents including medications, needles, syringes, and bio-hazardous waste. This can usually be accomplished by engaging the vehicles exterior door locks. Ambulance keys should not be left in the ignition unless the vehicle is running, is occupied by a crewmember, or is parked at the scene of a call. Ambulances shall be completely locked whenever both crewmembers are outside of the vehicle and out of sight or out of reach of the vehicle. The only exception is when the crew is parked at the scene of a call. All keys shall be returned to their proper place before ending a shift.
If the vehicle is secured inside a fully enclosed bay or fenced area which limits access to only those specifically authorized to operate the vehicle the use of vehicle locks may be optional. The use of vehicle locks or securely enclosed vehicle parking does not preclude the use of tamper-evident plastic seals which must always be in place.

All EMS associates working in the field must carry an up-to-date copy of their driver’s license as a type of photo ID which includes the full name while on duty. Any passengers accompanying a patient being transported by ambulance will need to be identified and listed by name with CMED during transport.

In addition, if any carry-on baggage is carried onto the ambulance the MGA associate MUST check all bags for any hazardous materials and/or weapons prior to going en-route.

**Temperature Extremes**

Medications, including IV fluids must be stored in a climate controlled environment which does not allow the temperature to drop below or rise above the established limits set by the Medical Director. Insulated cabinets, heaters, cool packs, and other methods may be used to maintain the temperature of the medications. The temperature inside each medication storage area should be verified at the change of each season to verify methods in place are functioning as expected. In the event a temperature limit is exceeded the medication in question should be removed from service and replaced. The medication exposed to extremes should be reported to the Medical Director and supplying pharmacy to determine what to do with the medication.

**Reporting Vehicle Failures and Malfunctions**

Vehicle and equipment operating in an efficient and safe manor is critical to the operations of Mid Georgia Ambulance. It is the policy of Mid Georgia Ambulance that all vehicles and equipment shall remain in optimum working order which is essential for crew and patient safety.

Vehicle and equipment malfunctions should be reported as soon as they are recognized. This is normally done with in ePro web based system. In the event a failure or malfunction is recognized while a crew is on duty it is required that CMED and the on-duty supervisor/Operations Manager be notified immediately.