

Patient Handling

Too often the basics of patient handling are taken for granted. Improper lifting and moving patients can cause injury and damage to you, the patient and your organization. Industry statistics show that patient drops are a leading cause for claims of negligence. The EMS industry estimates there are an estimated 42,000 patient drops annually.

The incidence of patient drops can be attributed to a few generalized areas:

- Improper selection and use of equipment
- Improper balance/strength of crews
- Improper evaluation of scene hazards
- Improper maintenance of equipment
- Equipment failure/malfunctions

Some General Rules for Safe Patient Handling

- Assess the scene for hazards that may inhibit moving the patient safely (i.e, plush carpet, soft ground, inclined surfaces, narrow hallways, etc.)
- Select and utilize the proper lifting device
- Know the weights you're about to lift (ask the patient's weight if you can and add to the weight of the equipment)
- Know your physical abilities and limitations and also those of your partner
- Attempt to apply your physical abilities to your partner's and to the situation
- Use proper lifting techniques and keep the weight you're lifting close to your body
- Communicate clearly and frequently with your partner(s) —verbalize all commands
- Don't hesitate to request assistance with the lift or movement of the patient