



Ground Ambulance Licensing:

# A County Commissioner Responsibility

**Did you know that the Board of County Commissioners for each Colorado County is responsible for licensing ground ambulance services and issuing ground ambulance permits on an annual basis?**

The Emergency Medical and Trauma Services Act specifically delegates responsibility for ground ambulance licensing to Counties. To help illustrate, C.R.S. § 25-3.5-301, states, in part:

“

**... no person shall provide ambulance service publicly or privately in this state unless that person holds a valid license to do so issued by the board of county commissioners of the county in which the ambulance service is based ...**

”

## Ground Ambulance Licensing FAQ's

### Who is responsible for Ground Ambulance Licensing in Colorado?

The Board of County Commissioners in each County is responsible for the licensing of ground ambulances, and programs vary from County to County. Administration of the licensing program may fall to a department in the County government, such as Emergency Management or County Administration. A contract for services from a qualified inspector may be a solution, or it may be delegated to the local public health department or a formal advisory body, such as a local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Council or a Regional Emergency Medical and Trauma Advisory Council (RETAC).

### How often is each ambulance inspected?

Each ambulance must be inspected at least annually. The inspection process includes a mechanical inspection that evaluates the road-worthiness of each vehicle, as well as a comprehensive inspection of the medical equipment and supplies to verify compliance with regulatory requirements. While County Commissioners may delegate or contract the associated inspection process, Commissioners maintain the responsibility for licensure.

## Highlighted Changes in the New Rules Governing Ground Ambulance Licensing

- ◆ Counties shall periodically review their process for licensure of ambulance services. [3.3.1]
- ◆ Counties shall require that all ambulances be manufactured by an organization registered with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration as a final stage manufacturer. [3.3.1(H)]
- ◆ Counties shall ensure that all inspectors do not have any disclosed or undisclosed, actual or potential conflicts of interest with the ambulance service or inspection process. [3.3.1(I)]
- ◆ Counties shall establish a process by which ambulance services not licensed within the County's jurisdiction may provide transport, if all licensed ambulance services are unable to meet the needs of the patient. [3.3.2]
- ◆ Counties shall post information for the public concerning how to file a complaint about a licensed ambulance service, or agencies operating ambulances without a license. [4.2.1]
- ◆ The minimum BLS equipment list now includes a BBG suction catheter, a pulse oximeter with adult and pediatric sensors, an arterial tourniquet, child protective restraints to accommodate a weight range from 5 to 99 pounds, and pediatric reference tools for medication dosages, equipment sizing and vital signs. [9.2]

## Models for County Ground Ambulance Licensing Programs in Colorado

- ◆ In **Eagle County**, the Board of County Commissioners has appointed members to the Central Mountains Regional Emergency Trauma Services Advisory Council (CMRETAC) for the purpose of overseeing and approving ambulance licensing.
- ◆ In **El Paso County**, all licensing and permitting functions occur through County staff. The primary County licensing official coordinates the program and utilizes a part time ambulance inspector who performs most of the inspections. Any changes to the County Resolution regulating ambulance licensure and permitting are performed through a stakeholder process where local providers are invited to provide feedback on changes prior to consideration by the Board of County Commissioners. Complaints against providers are handled collaboratively between the Ambulance Licensing Official and the County Attorney's Office, unless it is a complaint against an individual Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider, which is referred to the state.
- ◆ The **Multi-County Ambulance Inspection & Licensing Program Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)** – This Six-County collaboration seeks to consolidate the inspection process, standardize the licensure program, and establish a high standard of quality of ambulance services. In the IGA are Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield (City and County), Douglas, Elbert, and Jefferson Counties. In order to create efficiency, reduce costs and create uniformity of operations, the inspection program is administered by Jefferson County Public Health and employs one ambulance inspector. To assure road-worthiness, each in-service ambulance requires an annual motor vehicle condition inspection. Currently Jefferson County Public Health is developing an online software to streamline the vehicle inspections process. This software will also allow for the automation and storage of all documentation online.

- ◆ Numerous forms have been developed for the program, including an Application, Pre-Inspection Check-list, License Inspection Checklist, Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support Checklist, Certificate of Motor Vehicle Condition as well as a Complaint Form. Samples of the **Multi-County Ambulance License Forms** can be found at: <http://www.dcsheriff.net/sheriffs-office/divisions/emergency-management/ambulance-licenses/>
- ◆ The **RETAC Coordinator for the San Luis Valley** oversees ambulance licensing for Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande and Saguache Counties. The Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the program, inspecting nearly 30 vehicles and presenting the application and supporting documentation to the respective County Commissioners for them to sign and issue the annual license. The SLV RETAC does not charge for ambulance inspection and licensing in the region's Counties.
- ◆ The **Pueblo Department of Public Health & Environment (PDPHE)** oversees the ambulance licensing program for 51 ambulances in Pueblo County. The Board of County Commissioners has designated to the PDPHE the management, inspection and license issuance for the program. The license is issued by the PDPHE Director.
- ◆ The **Routt County EMS Advisory Council (Council)** plays a key role in ground ambulance service licensing. The Council makes ground ambulance licensing recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The Council also provides advice to the Board on the ambulance licensing resolution and other emergency medical and trauma services matters of local or regional interest. The Council contracts with a qualified, third party inspector to verify compliance with minimum equipment requirements and requires mechanical inspection of the vehicle to be completed by a qualified mechanic or the State Patrol Motor Carrier Safety Section. The Council prepares the ambulance service licenses and ambulance permits for the Board to issue after formal action at a regular meeting.
- ◆ The **Summit County Board of County Commissioners** has designated the Director of Emergency Management to administratively oversee and approve ambulance vehicle permit applications, pursuant to the existing EMS Regulations, in order to streamline and expedite each application.

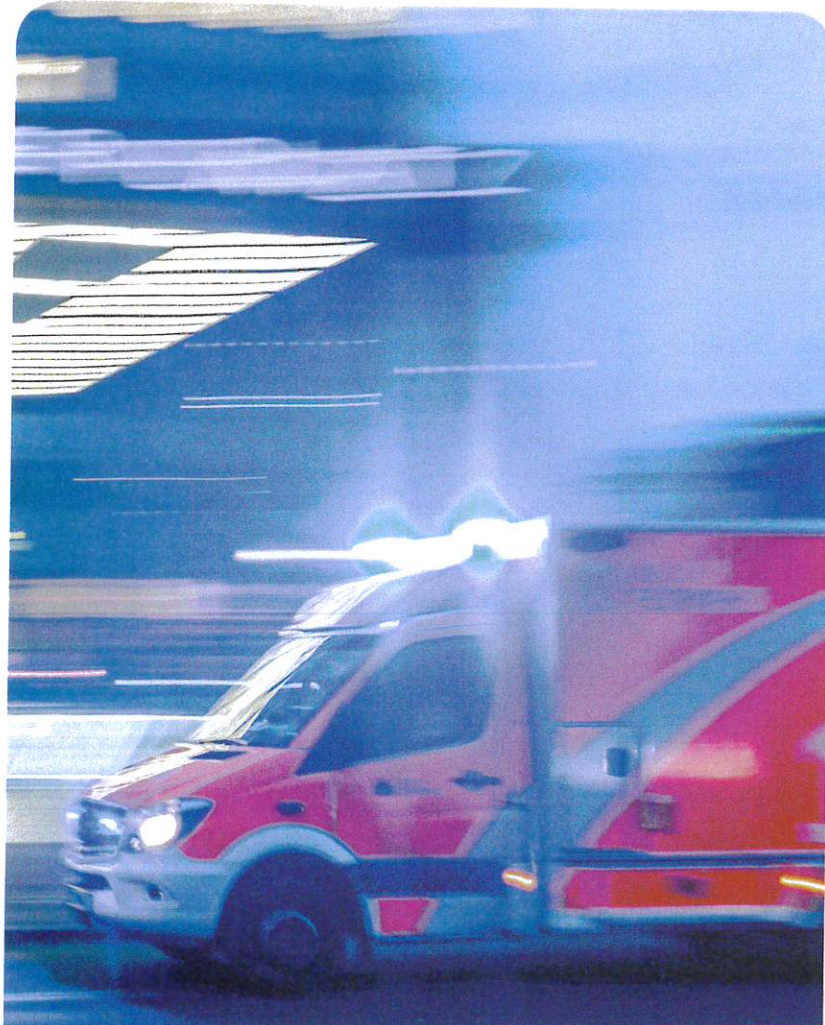
## NEW Colorado State Board of Health Rules Governing Ground Ambulance Licensing

The latest revision was adopted by the State Board of Health on November 21, 2018 and became effective on January 14, 2019. The current version of this document can be found in its entirety at <https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR>, including updated definitions of: Ambulance, Ambulance Advanced Life Support (ALS), Ambulance Basic Life Support (BLS), Medical Continuous Quality Management (CQM) Program, and Medical Director.



## Who determines the cost of a ground ambulance license or ambulance permit?

Each County sets the cost for their ground ambulance inspection and licensing program. Some Counties charge a per ambulance fee, others charge an annual fee in addition to the fee per ambulance and some Counties do not charge.



## Conclusion



Each Board of County Commissioners in the state of Colorado is responsible for the application, inspection, program costs, and issuance of ground ambulance service licenses. Ground ambulance licensing processes and programs vary widely across the state. The Counties with model ground ambulance licensing programs listed above, as well as the CDPHE, are available to help with the planning and development of local ambulance licensing programs.

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