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The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is seeking input from paramedics, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and other interested parties on the development of new design guidelines for ambulances to reduce the crash risk to emergency workers.

Emergency medical service (EMS) workers riding in the back of ambulances are at high risk of suffering injuries during a crash or a maneuver to avoid a crash if they're not using restraints. However, restraints make it difficult to access and treat patients while in route to a hospital. To meet the challenge of finding a balance between these two demands, NIST, the Department of Homeland Security's Human Factors and Behavioral Sciences Division (DHS HFD) and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) are developing design guidelines for ambulance patient compartments that maximize safety without compromising effectiveness.

These guidelines will be used to update current, and enhance emerging, ambulance design criteria, such as National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1917, the "Standard for Automotive Ambulances."

To gather input for the guidelines from a broad cross-section of the key stakeholders, EMTs and paramedics, the three agencies are conducting an anonymous web survey from Nov. 28, 2011, to Dec. 28, 2011.

Insight and opinions from this survey will supplement data previously gathered from focus groups, interviews with individual EMS workers, visits to equipment manufacturers and EMS stations, and "ride-along" experiences aboard on-duty ambulances.

The web survey can be found at either the NIST Office of Law Enforcement Standards site, www.nist.gov/oles, or the DHS Responder Knowledge Database site, www.rkb.us.

For more information, or to get more involved in the effort to improve safety in ambulance patient compartments, contact Darren Wilson, DHS, at (202) 254-6657 or darren.wilson@dhs.gov; Larry Avery, BMT Designers & Planners, at (919) 713-0383 or lavery@dandp.com; or Jennifer Marshall, NIST, at (301) 975-3396 or jennifer.marshall@nist.gov.