



Please Ensure all EMS Practitioners Are Counted

REQUEST

Please support the EMS Counts Act, soon to be introduced by Rep. GT Thompson (R-PA) and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME).

This bill would require the Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to make changes to its system to accurately count the total number of EMS practitioners by accounting for those who also serve as firefighters.

BACKGROUND

EMS consists of a diverse group of first responders and health care practitioners who often serve in dual roles, including Paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), and dual-role Firefighter/EMTs and Firefighter/Paramedics. These professionals respond to more than 40 million calls for service annually, and they are critical to ensuring public health and safety.¹

The current structure of the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) – the system used by DOL/BLS – has led to an undercounting of EMS personnel due to the exclusion of dual-role firefighter/EMS personnel. The failure to capture the number of Firefighters who are cross-trained as EMTs and Paramedics has led to a substantial undercounting of EMS practitioners. This data is used to make funding and other policy decisions, so this undercount has significant ripple effects.

To appropriately count the total number of EMS practitioners, the SOC must account for the fact that a significant portion of EMS practitioners also serve as firefighters, performing both sets of duties as their primary role.

This bill would require the Secretary of Labor to revise the SOC System by dividing the general occupational category of “Firefighter” into three sub-categories. Specifically, the bill directs BLS to revise the broad description under the occupational series “33-2011 Firefighters” of the 2018 SOC to include the following new occupations: (1) Firefighters. (2) Firefighter/EMTs. (3) Firefighter/Paramedics. These changes will address the chronic miscounting of EMS personnel by allowing firefighters to identify themselves as cross-trained EMS practitioners.

To learn more or to cosponsor the EMS Counts Act, please contact Brian Arata in Rep. Thompson’s office at Brian.Arata@mail.house.gov or Katherine Huiskes in Sen. Collins’ office at Katherine_Huiskes@collins.senate.gov.

¹ https://www.ems.gov/assets/COVID-19_EMS_911_Briefing.pdf

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Many Fire Departments Provide EMS Services

Many fire departments provide multiple types of EMS services. In fact, over the past four decades, EMS has become a core function of the American fire and emergency service. According to data from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2021, nearly three-quarters of all 9-1-1 calls to fire departments were for medical emergencies². These 26.3 million responses have pushed the fire service to become the largest providers of EMS nationwide.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, of the nation's more than 30,000 fire departments³:

- 60.9% of fire departments provide Basic Life Support
- 40.4% of fire departments provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) non-transport response
- 21.7% of fire departments provide Advanced Life Support
- 21.1% provide EMS ambulance transport

Dual-Role Firefighter/EMTs and Firefighter/Paramedics are Undercounted

In 2020, the National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) – with support from the U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Emergency Medical Services – released the 2020 National Emergency Medical Services Assessment⁴. With responses from all 50 states as well as Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, this assessment showed 1,052,842 licensed EMS professionals in the United States, approximately 917,000 of whom are EMTs or Paramedics. In contrast, the May 2020 BLS data⁵ shows 257,700 EMTs and Paramedics. This reflects an undercounting of more than 795,000.

² <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/research/nfpa-research/fire-statistical-reports/fire-department-calls>

³ <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/registry/summary>

⁴ https://nasemso.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-National-EMS-Assessment_Reduced-File-Size.pdf

⁵ <https://www.bls.gov/oes/2020/may/oes292040.htm>