



**REGION 11
CHICAGO EMS SYSTEM
POLICY**

Title: Watercraft SEMSV Program

Section: Patient Care

Approved: EMS Medical Directors Consortium

Effective: December 17, 2025

WATERCRAFT SEMSV PROGRAM

I. PURPOSE

- A. To ensure safety for responders and patients during a water response.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. SEMSV: A “Specialized Emergency Medical Services Vehicle” (SEMSV) is a vehicle or conveyance that is not an ambulance as defined in the EMS Act but is primarily intended to provide emergency care and transportation to ill or injured patients by means of air, water, or ground transportation.
- B. Watercraft: A specialized vessel used by a Watercraft SEMSV Program for water-based emergency response and patient transport.

III. POLICY

- A. Watercraft SEMSV Programs operate as a licensed watercraft-based emergency response program under IDPH Administrative Code, Section 515.965, *Watercraft Requirements*.
- B. Watercrafts shall meet requirements of Article IV of the Boat Registration and Safety Act.
- C. Watercrafts are licensed by IDPH as Specialized Emergency Medical Services Vehicles (SEMSVs).
- D. Watercrafts are maintained and operated by the EMS Agency, which is responsible for daily inventory, maintenance, and restocking of medical equipment and supplies.
- E. Watercraft will be operated by a qualified Watercraft Operator and crewed by licensed EMS personnel, meeting IDPH staffing regulations.
- F. Watercraft Operator and EMS crew will have all required Illinois licensing and certifications, including marine safety training as per IDPH Section 515.965.
- G. Watercraft SEMSV Programs should have a map that defines service area of operations.

IV. WATERCRAFT SEMSV PROGRAM

A. Staffing

1. The Watercraft SEMSV Program and EMS System should maintain a current roster of watercraft crew members including EMS license and required training.
2. All crew members assigned to a watercraft shall be approved by the EMS MD.
3. An ALS watercraft must have a minimum of one licensed Paramedic and one licensed EMT on each watercraft, in addition to the watercraft operator.



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4. In an ALS watercraft response, the paramedic shall be the primary clinician responsible for patient care until handoff to another EMS crew.

B. Watercraft Activation

1. Requests for a watercraft response may come through multiple channels:
 - a. Direct to the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Station
 - b. The International Hailing and Distress frequency (Channel 16)
 - c. The Office of Emergency Management and Communication (OEMC)
 - d. Direct civilian contact
2. All requests are routed through the OEMC for situational awareness and to ensure an appropriate level of response.
3. Watercraft may also self-dispatch to active emergencies observed while on patrol.

C. Patient Flow

1. An on-water watercraft response may have multiple agencies respond including:
 - a. Chicago Fire Department (CFD)
 - b. Chicago Police Department (CPD)
 - c. United States Coast Guard (USCG)
2. On-water medical responses
 - a. When a non-medical watercraft (CPD and USCG) responds to a medical incident, the on-board personnel shall consider a medical watercraft intercept of patients and/or personnel and equipment to a CFD watercraft to initiate emergency medical care versus an expeditious transport to shore.
 - b. Considerations for requesting a medical watercraft response include:
 - Environmental conditions on Lake Michigan and other bodies of water;
 - Patient assessment and medical condition;
 - Maintaining responder and patient safety.
3. Transfer of patient care on land
 - a. Watercraft personnel will transfer the patient safely to EMS personnel on land.
 - b. Patient handoff should occur from the on-water response personnel to the paramedics on land.

D. Medical Direction

1. EMS personnel on the Watercraft SEMSV should contact Online Medical Control (OLMC) per the Field to Hospital Communication Policy.



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V. EQUIPMENT AND MEDICATIONS

A. Medications

1. Each ALS watercraft will carry medications, equipment, and supplies as defined on the Region 11 ALS non-transport list.

B. Additional Equipment/Supplies

1. Watercraft specific equipment per IDPH Section 515.970.
2. Additional equipment specific to watercrafts operating on Lake Michigan.

C. Communication Equipment

1. For contact of Online Medical Control through cellular phone.
2. For contact with law enforcement agencies.
3. For communication with dispatch center.

VI. PATIENT TREATMENT PROTOCOLS AND POLICIES

- A. Patient care on the watercraft follows Region 11 EMS Protocols, Policies, Procedures.
- B. For on-water responses, conditions may limit the medical care provided in this environment, however it is expected that patient care begins at the point of contact and appropriate treatment is initiated, including ALS level care when indicated and safe.

VII. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- A. Each watercraft crew member will complete a boat safety course conducted pursuant to Section 5-18 of the Boat Registration and Safety Act [625 ILCS 45].
- B. Records of education or training completion should be maintained by the EMS Agency and by the EMS System

VIII. QUALITY ASSURANCE

- A. All patient care run reports are reviewed by the EMS System and the EMS Agency.