



Austin Fire Department

"Our Mission Goes Beyond Our Name"

4201 Ed Bluestein, Austin, TX 78721

(512) 974-0130

www.austinfiredepartment.org

I called 911 and asked for an ambulance. Why did I get a fire truck?

Both the Austin Fire Department (AFD) and Austin/Travis County EMS (ATCEMS) are required for medical response and work as partners to deliver medical service. The teamwork between Austin Fire and ATCEMS provides an effective response to citizens with medical emergencies. Rapid response, quality pre-hospital care, and transport to the appropriate medical facility makes our system effective and cost efficient.

Firefighters provide the initial first response and care (Basic Life Support or BLS) with a crew of four Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), followed by ATCEMS who provides Advanced Life Support (ALS) via one Paramedic and one EMT, along with the capability to transport individual(s) to the hospital.

EMS Dispatch prioritizes the calls for service using the numbers 1 through 5; Priority 1 is the most serious. Fire units are dispatched on all Priority 1 and 2 calls, and select Priority 3 calls. Firefighters are also dispatched on lower acuity calls when it benefits the patient.

Fire responds to medical calls for the following reasons:

- **Faster response times.** Fire crews often arrive several minutes ahead of EMS. Crews provide initial care and life-saving treatment (such as CPR, application of Automatic External Defibrillators, airway management, and bleeding control and extrication of trapped patients when required).
- **More fire units available.** Across the city, there are more fire apparatus than there are EMS units. Fire station location is based on geographical response, while EMS considers both geographical response and call volume when placing units. Firefighter task time averages 20 minutes per medical call to EMS' much longer time as they provide ALS and transport to the hospital.
- **Fire crews provide needed staffing on critical calls that are personnel intensive, as well as the ability to lift and move patients.** Firefighters often ride in ambulances with EMS personnel to assist during transport.