



Save Triple Zero (000) for Saving Lives

Frequently Asked Questions

NSW Ambulance responds to a Triple Zero (000) call every 26.7 seconds. A significant number of these calls requesting an ambulance, however, are not an emergency and don't require paramedic medical assistance.

Life threatening symptoms include breathing difficulty, loss of consciousness, chest pain, broken bone(s), head injury, suspected heart attack or stroke, excessive blood loss or a significant motor vehicle crash or fall.

There are plenty of alternatives to calling for an ambulance, including Healthdirect – a free 24 hour Health Advice Line (1800 022 222) staffed by registered nurses who provide expert health advice. Other alternatives include seeing your local GP, pharmacist or calling an after-hours medical centre.

Here are frequently asked questions regarding calling an ambulance:

WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR AN AMBULANCE?

NSW Ambulance is required to charge a fee for the service provided in accordance with the scale of fees approved by the NSW Ministry of Health. Ambulance has an obligation to recover payment of accounts due to the considerable costs involved in providing services, and follows up payments for outstanding accounts.

WILL MEDICARE COVER AMBULANCE ACCOUNTS?

No, Medicare doesn't cover the cost of the provision of ambulance services.

WHO DECIDES THE FEES FOR AMBULANCE SERVICES?

NSW Ambulance fees are determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, and represent the actual cost of the provision of ambulance services. In NSW, all revenue earned through the charging of fees is used to provide ongoing funding for ambulance services within NSW.

ARE ANY AMBULANCE SERVICES PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE?

Ambulance services in NSW are provided free of charge to concession card holders, including pensioners. NSW Ambulance also has a policy in place for patients who are under financial hardship and unable to pay for our services. 'Ambulance only' insurance cover is available from major private health insurers in NSW to enable policy holders to avoid ambulance fees.

IF I CALL TRIPLE ZERO (000) WILL AN AMBULANCE ARRIVE STRAIGHT AWAY?

When you call Triple Zero (000), the control centre officer will ask you a series of questions. The answers you give will be used to determine the type of response required.

HOW DOES THE CONTROL CENTRE OFFICER KNOW IF I NEED AN AMBULANCE?

Control centre officers are highly skilled and trained in using the internationally recognised Medical Priority Dispatch System. It's important that you answer the control centre officer's questions accurately, as your answers will determine the type of response.

I THINK I'M HAVING A HEART ATTACK. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR AN AMBULANCE TO ARRIVE?

If you have a life-threatening condition, like chest pain or chest tightness, breathing difficulties, sudden numbness or paralysis of the face, arm or leg, the nearest ambulance will be sent straight away under lights and sirens.

IF AN AMBULANCE ARRIVES, WILL I BE TAKEN TO HOSPITAL?

Not every patient who is treated by a paramedic will be taken to hospital. Some patients will not require transport.



AMBULANCE FACTSHEET

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IF I GO BY AMBULANCE, WILL I BE SEEN BY A DOCTOR SOONER?

No. It's a common misconception that arriving at hospital in an ambulance will result in you receiving treatment sooner. All patients arriving at an emergency department are assessed, triaged, prioritised and treated according to their medical condition, whether they arrive by ambulance or other means.

I CALLED TRIPLE ZERO (000) FOR AN AMBULANCE, THEREFORE IT'S AN EMERGENCY.

We understand that when people around you are sick and you don't know what to do, it can be very stressful. A life threatening emergency will always be given priority and responded to as an emergency. Ambulance Triple Zero (000) call takers are trained to provide first aid advice over the phone, so treatment of the patient can commence before an Ambulance is on scene.

WHAT IS SECONDARY TRIAGE?

Secondary triage refers to a system whereby calls to Triple Zero (000) which are initially triaged as not requiring an emergency response, are transferred to a registered nurse who provides medical advice over the phone.

IS TRANSFERRING ME TO SECONDARY TRIAGE A WAY OF GETTING RID OF ME?

No. The secondary triage process is conducted by registered nurses who provide expert advice and identify the right health service for your need.

IS TRANSFERRING MY CALL TO SECONDARY TRIAGE A COST SAVING MECHANISM?

No. Secondary triage is a way of providing the best care for a patient who doesn't require the emergency assistance of paramedics.

WHAT IF YOU TRANSFER ME TO A SECONDARY TRIAGE BUT MY CONDITION DETERIORATES?

If your call is transferred to the secondary triage service, your call will be answered by a registered nurse. The nurse can return the call to Triple Zero (000) at any time if they believe an ambulance is required.

I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT AT MY LOCAL HOSPITAL, CAN AN AMBULANCE TAKE ME?

No. Ambulances are for medical emergencies only. Inappropriate calls to NSW Ambulance cost the community in dollars and lives.

WILL THE AMBULANCE HAVE ITS LIGHTS AND SIRENS OPERATING ON THE WAY TO HOSPITAL?

Lights and sirens are only used during transport to hospital if the patient's condition is deemed as life-threatening or rapidly deteriorating.

WHY DON'T AMBULANCES ALWAYS DRIVE WITH LIGHTS AND SIRENS?

Reducing the unnecessary use of lights and sirens improves road safety for paramedics, patients and the community.

If you're unsure what to do with an account you have received, contact the Ambulance Customer Service Centre on 1300 655 200 (toll free).

Only call NSW Ambulance in an emergency. Save Triple Zero (000) for Saving Lives.