Job description
Paramedics and EMTs operate under the protocols of the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Committee (PHECC). The biggest difference between the two is in terms of their training and their scope of practice. Put simply, paramedics undergo a longer period of training than EMTs and are therefore qualified to do a lot more.

Paramedics and EMTs are often the first healthcare professionals to arrive at any scene of an accident or medical emergency. They are typically one of a two-person ambulance crew. They are trained to resuscitate and stabilise patients using sophisticated techniques, equipment and drugs. They are responsible for managing the pre-hospital treatment, care and movement of patients to hospital without unnecessary delay. This often requires taking potentially life-saving decisions. They are required to work closely with other healthcare professionals and emergency services and are therefore required to be highly trained and skilled in all aspects of pre-hospital care ranging from crash injuries to cardiac arrests.

The National Ambulance Service operates from 94 Stations located throughout the Country and is controlled from 14 Command and Control centres with approximately 1350 staff involved. The Dublin Fire Brigade provides an emergency ambulance service for the greater Dublin area. Part of the Health Service Executive also has its own ambulance services.

Each service employs practitioners who are registered at Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic or Advanced Paramedic level. However, employment with the National Ambulance Service is confined to those qualified as paramedics or higher.

Responding to emergency calls makes up only a fraction of the total number of ambulance service journeys; they are also involved in non emergency work through the patient transport service.

Work activities
• Carrying out daily inspections on the equipment and the ambulance itself.
• Transmitting and receiving information via radio/telephone.
• Responding to emergency calls – driving quickly and carefully to the site of the incident.
• Briefing hospital staff, giving an accurate report of the patient’s condition, circumstances of the accident and treatment given.
• Assessing the situation and patient condition on arrival and attending to patients using the full range of pre-hospital emergency care and extended skills as appropriate.
• Administering life saving procedures and appropriate treatment where required such as inserting drips and fluid, administering resuscitation and dealing with broken bones.
• Assessing the most appropriate method of conveying patients using the relevant equipment and lifting techniques when necessary.
• Maintaining a high quality of patient care ensuring that consideration is given at all times to the feelings and needs of the patient.
• Writing patient reports and completing log sheets for each shift.
• Attending regular training to keep up to speed on procedures or be introduced to new equipment and practices.
• Attending relevant courses for re-certification.

Work conditions
Travel: a regular feature of the job.

Working hours: Full-time National Ambulance Service paramedics normally work a shift system to provide constant cover.

Location: mainly in towns or cities throughout the country.

(continued overleaf)
Opportunities for self-employment: Unlikely, though it is possible to operate a private ambulance service.

**Typical employers**

Employment opportunities within the pre-hospital emergency care environment in Ireland are in a number of areas:

- Statutory ambulance services that respond to emergency (112/999) incidents.
- Private ambulance services that are privately owned and may respond to emergency (112/999) incidents on behalf of the statutory services.
- Auxiliary services that provide emergency care as a by-product of their primary role, usually rescue.

However, most employment for paramedics is with the National Ambulance Service.

**Career development**

Promotion opportunities involve rising from EMT to paramedic, advanced paramedic and the position of Leading Ambulance Person.

**Salaries**

Salaries will vary depending on employing organisation.

**Entry requirements and training**

Ambulance personnel are qualified in accordance with the approved Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council standards (PHECC) – the Irish Emergency Medical Service (EMS) regulator. PHECC maintain a statutory register of pre-hospital emergency care practitioners. To be eligible to join the register you must hold the National Qualification in Emergency Medical Technology (NQEMT) as awarded by PHECC. There are three divisions on the PHECC register: EMT, Paramedic and Advanced Paramedic. Each level has specific qualification requirements and continuous professional development requirements.

**Specific degree subjects required**

Republic of Ireland: A degree is not essential to become a paramedic.

Northern Ireland: The title "Paramedic" is protected by the Health Professions Council (HPC) statutory regulatory body whose main aim is to protect the public. This means that to be employed and practise as a Paramedic, you must be registered with the HPC.

**Other relevant degree subjects**

- Nursing
- Medicine
- Social care.

**Postgraduate study**

A pre-entry postgraduate qualification is not needed.

**Specific entry requirements**

Leaving Certificate with Mathematics and a science subject is normally required. You need to be in good health and comply with the specified physical standards. HSE Paramedic students must hold a full clean C1 driving licence (no restrictions) and are required to obtain a full D1 driving licence prior to being offered employment, following paramedic qualification.
In addition to these, there are other tests which you may be given to assess your suitability, including HSE Verbal Evaluation & Analytical Reasoning test. Garda/Police vetting – (Access NI checks) is also required. Normal colour vision may be required.

Training

The paramedic programme consists of a ten-month training period, leading to the completion of the National Qualification in Emergency Medical Technology exams, at paramedic level. Following successful completion of these exams candidates enter a one-year operational internship, at a location assigned by the Ambulance Service. Successful completion of the internship requires in the field assessments and completion of project work and specific training modules.

There is also an ongoing focus on maintaining clinical skills and in line with this the Ambulance Service has a dedicated full time School that provides appropriate training and education programmes.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is a process through which registered practitioners are required to perform a given number of interventions and attend a given number of seminars in order to maintain their position on the register. Each level has a distinct requirement of CPD points.

Tips for applications

Successful applicants tend to be more mature than school leavers. It is possible to undergo training in first aid and EMT procedures at a private college or recognised training centre beforehand, which may put candidates at an advantage during the recruitment process. Experience in a relevant field such as first aid or social care is an advantage. Join related voluntary organisations such as the Order of Malta or Red Cross. First aid certificates as evidence of your interest can be useful.

Visit your local National Ambulance Service base and talk with Lead EMT officers regarding current and future developments of the ambulance service to gain as much understanding as possible regarding the roles.

Skills and qualities

- Fit, healthy and have good stamina to cope with distressing situations.
- Physical strength, endurance and flexibility – ability to cope with physically and emotionally demanding situations.
- Interest in human biology/physiology.
- Caring, responsible and mature personality combined with good social and patient communication skills so that patient feels as comfortable as possible.
- Excellent communication and team-working skills.
- Mental agility combined with the ability to provide a calm and reassuring environment for patients and relatives.
- Commitment to continuing personal and professional development.

Don’t miss out!

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