



Mr. Pete Buttigieg
Secretary, Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We are writing to you to share with you our concerns regarding the availability of ambulance chassis and its impact on the delivery of ambulances to all services nationwide. The issue is now at a crisis level.

The American Ambulance Association (AAA), International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) represent the providers of vital emergency and non-emergency ground ambulance services and the paramedics, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and firefighters who deliver the direct medical care and transport for every community across the United States. Our members are all experiencing the strain of a shortage of vehicles, and we request that the Department of Transportation leadership encourage the chassis manufacturers to prioritize ambulance chassis productions so we can get inventory to the appropriate and necessary levels.

Lead times for new ambulance deliveries have extended from pre-pandemic norms of 90-120 days (from order to delivery) to 24 months and longer. This means that when an EMS provider loses an ambulance to a crash, or when it exceeds its useful/safe life, they have to wait almost two years to replace it - making it harder to ensure timely responses to 911 calls. A multitude of supply chain issues are impeding ambulance manufacturing, but the significantly reduced and erratic supply of ambulance chassis is the most crippling of the shortages.

Ambulance chassis are supplied by automotive original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) including Ford (accounting for about 80% of demand), GM, Chrysler, Daimler Trucks -North America and Navistar. These OEMs allocate a portion of their chassis production to be built with their required ambulance prep packages. For the past year and a half, ambulance manufacturers have been receiving only a fraction of their chassis orders. This has greatly slowed and disrupted production, and recently necessitated furloughs and layoffs at ambulance factories in places such as Indiana, North Carolina and Ohio. Ambulance factories in California, Florida and elsewhere in the U.S. risk having to furlough employees if supply chain issues are not quickly addressed. These staff reductions will hinder future recovery of the ambulance industry due to very tight labor markets and the time needed to train replacement employees.

The supply issues are happening at a time when ambulance demand from EMS providers is at record-high levels. In a typical year, the North American ambulance industry receives about 6,000 orders. Since 2020, that demand has continuously grown and in 2021 orders increased to 8,500/year (an increase of 41%). A growing chorus of fire chiefs and private EMS providers have gone on record stating their concern about ambulance shortages, including the Chief of EMS at the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), the Deputy Chief at the Washington DC Fire Department (DC Fire), representatives for the Fire Departments of Nashville, Detroit and Miami-Dade, in addition to the Fleet Director at American Medical Response (AMR), which is the largest private ambulance service operator in the U.S.

While the nation is facing supply chain issues in virtually every sector, this issue is a rapidly emerging threat to public safety. The lack of proper equipment puts additional pressure on an EMS system that is already over-stressed. This comes at a time when the country is still battling the COVID-19 pandemic, bracing for hurricane season, and dealing with increased roadway fatalities. The fifth pillar of the Department of Transportation's "National Roadway Safety Strategy" is Post-Crash Care - "Access to emergency and trauma care is critical to the survivability of crashes." The availability of ambulances is a critical element of post-crash care, and the safety of the patients, the first responders and must be addressed immediately.

Through our ongoing discussions with ambulance manufacturers, we know that for the past year they have been raising this issue with the chassis OEMs, several federal government organizations and lawmakers across the country. To date, they have gotten little meaningful traction and the situation has only deteriorated. What is even more alarming is that the chassis OEMs have indicated that the supply issues will continue well into 2023.

Secretary Buttigieg, we are calling upon you to step in and help to resolve this situation. The nation's ambulance manufacturers need a steady, predictable supply of these ambulance-specific chassis to keep production running smoothly and to catch up on the unacceptable backlog of orders from our nation's EMS providers. We ask that the DOT work with the chassis OEMs to truly prioritize EMS by allocating a larger portion of their builds to ambulance manufacturers. Chassis supply should be restored to pre-crisis levels that allow for a continual 90-days of supply. This will position ambulance manufacturers to properly serve our members with timely production. Our hope is that with your help, the right people can come together to solve this issue in support of our nation's EMS providers.

Thank you in advance for continuing to help ensure that ground ambulance service organizations and fire departments and our paramedics, EMTs and firefighters have the ambulances necessary to continue providing critical emergency 9-1-1 and non-emergency care and medical transport.

Sincerely,

American Ambulance Association

International Association of Fire Chiefs

International Association of Fire Fighters

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians