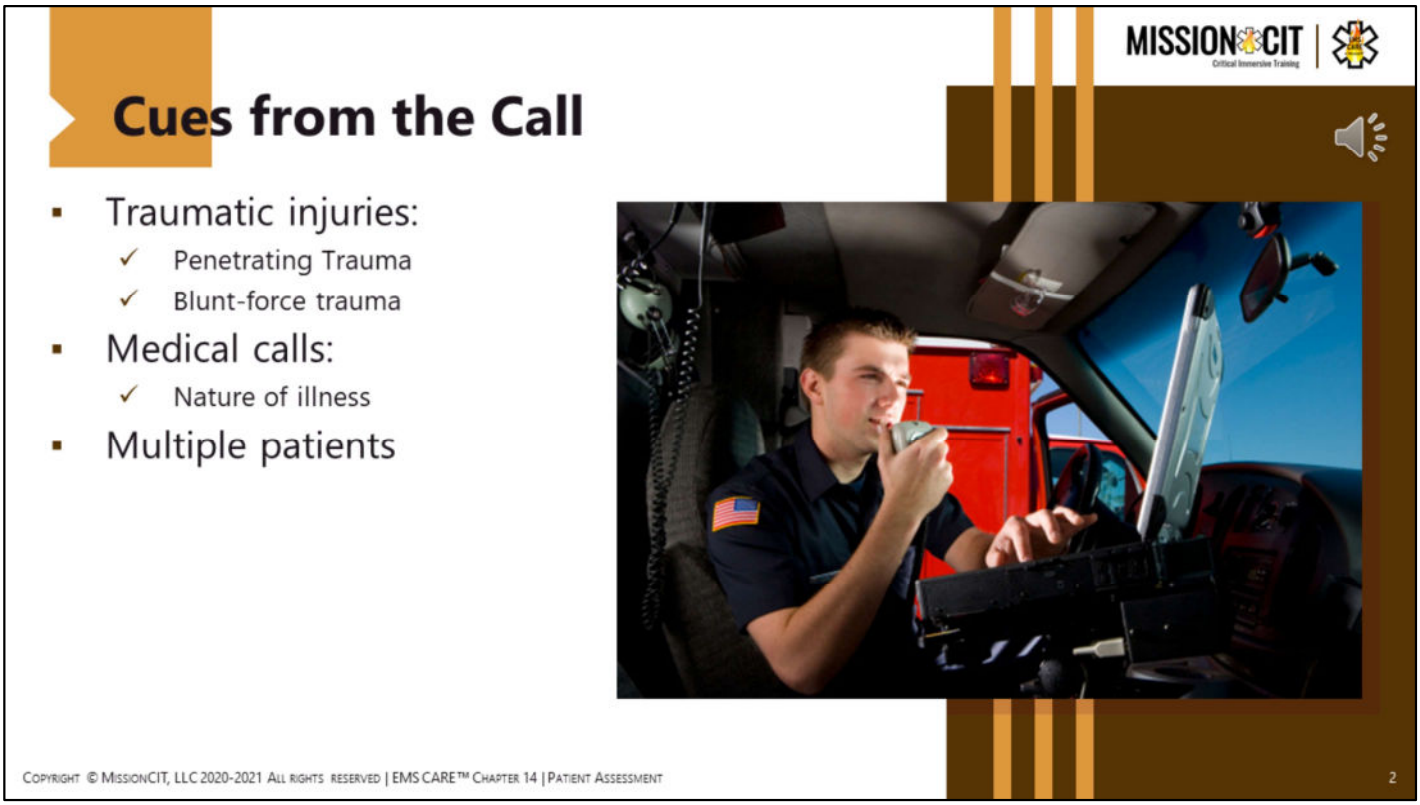


Hello and welcome to the first lesson where we talk about how you can size-up the situation as soon as you walk in, and more importantly, how to identify dangerous situations and protect yourself from them.

So, let's get started!



Emergency medical calls fall into two broad categories, namely, traumatic injuries and calls related to medical conditions. Some situations may include both of these categories.

At the time of dispatch, get as much information as possible from the dispatch desk, so you can be prepared to handle the situation.

If the call is for a traumatic injury, strive to identify the mechanism of injury, and whether it is a blunt or penetrating trauma.

Penetrating trauma occurs if the injury is caused by an object that passes through the skin or any other body tissue. The extent of the injury would also depend on the velocity of the object that caused the injury. For example, low-velocity objects like knives can cause multiple injuries, but it will be limited to the area where they penetrated.

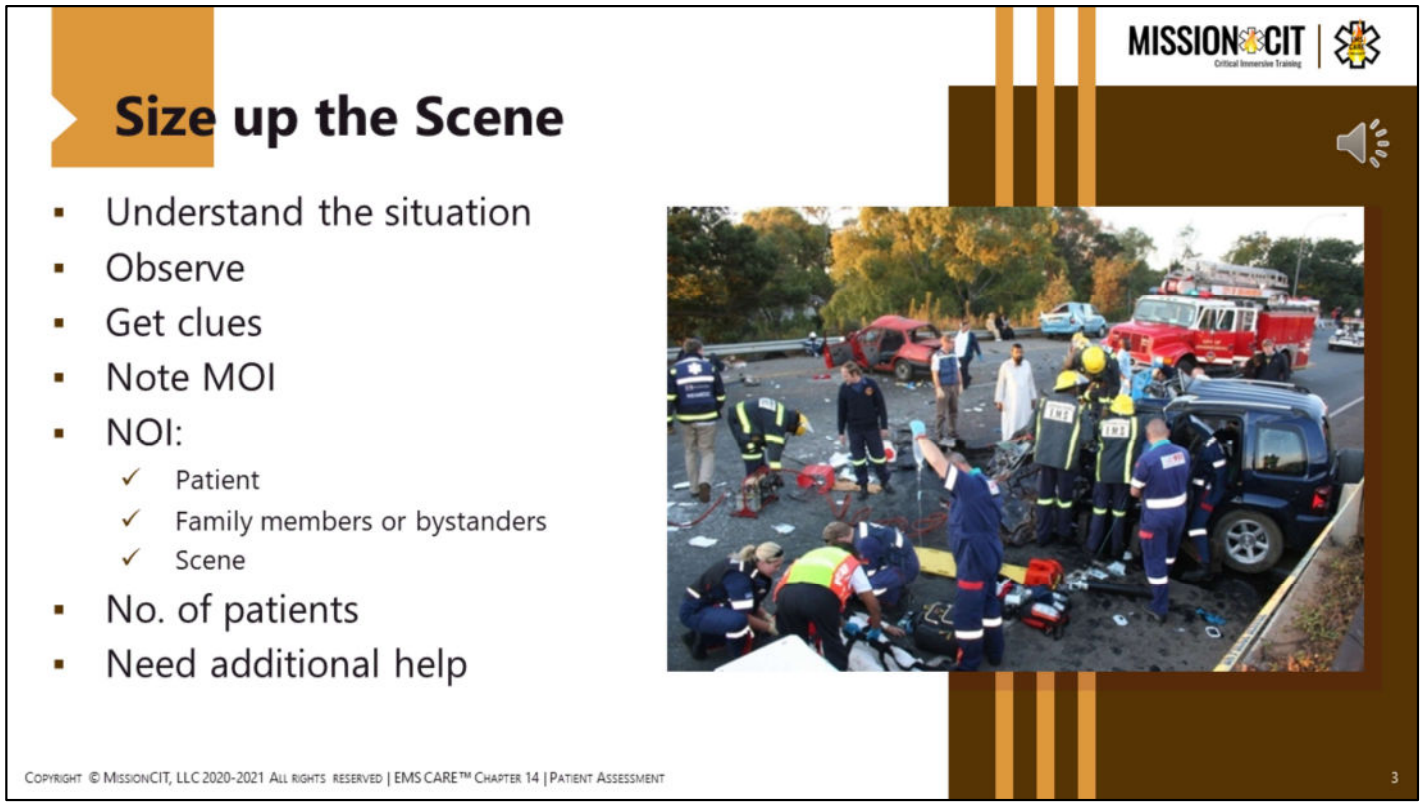
On the other hand, medium or high-velocity objects like a bullet from a gun can cause intense damage that could include pressure-related damages and cavitation.

Blunt force trauma is an injury caused by a blow that strikes the body but does not penetrate the skin or tissues. The damage is not much and can often be overlooked.

In calls related to medical conditions, strive to understand the nature of illness.

With these objectives in mind, enter a scene as getting answers to these questions early can help to provide appropriate care for the patient.

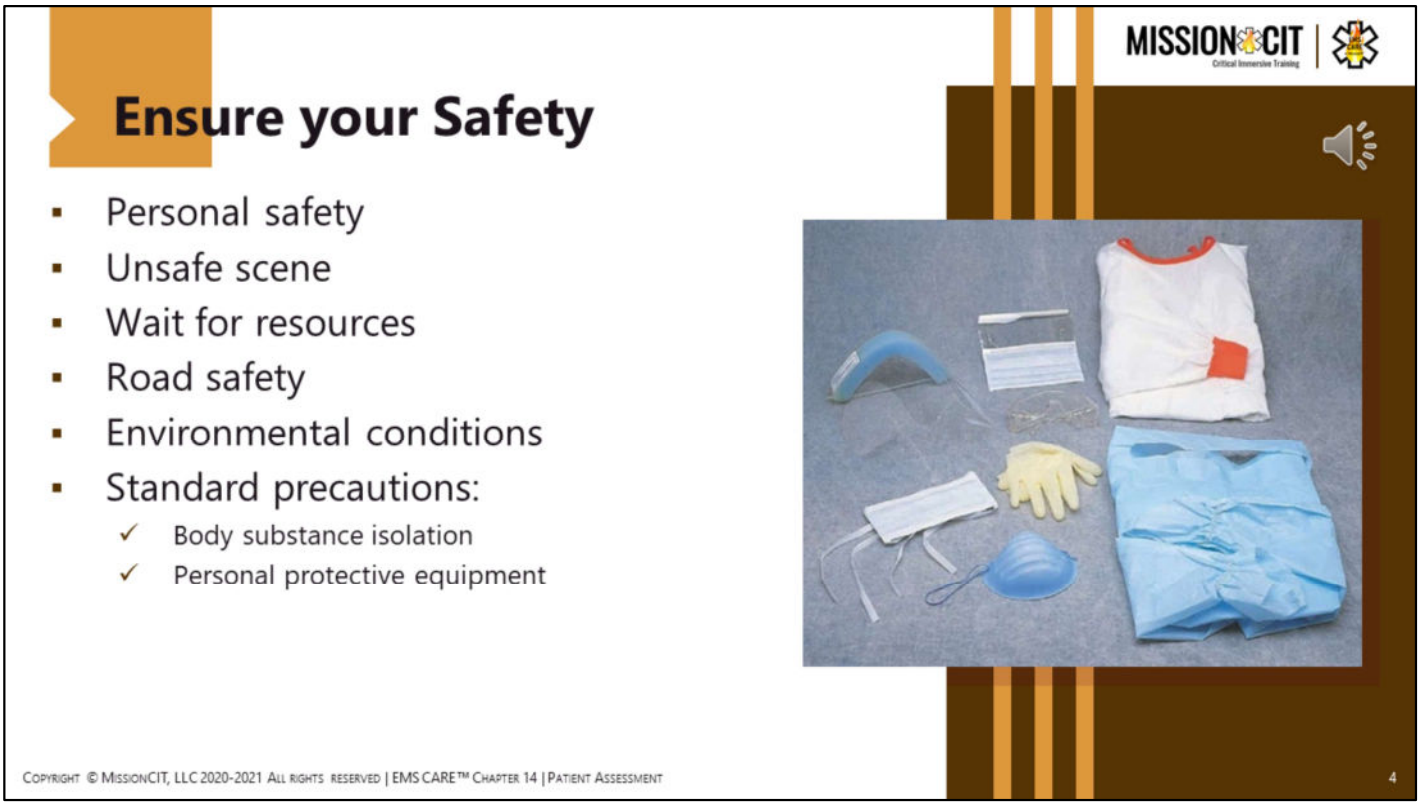
Be on the lookout for scenes where multiple patients display the same symptoms. This could be a potentially unsafe scene, so approach it carefully.



This is an important step that can make a big difference in the quality of care offered and protecting yourself and others from violent situations.

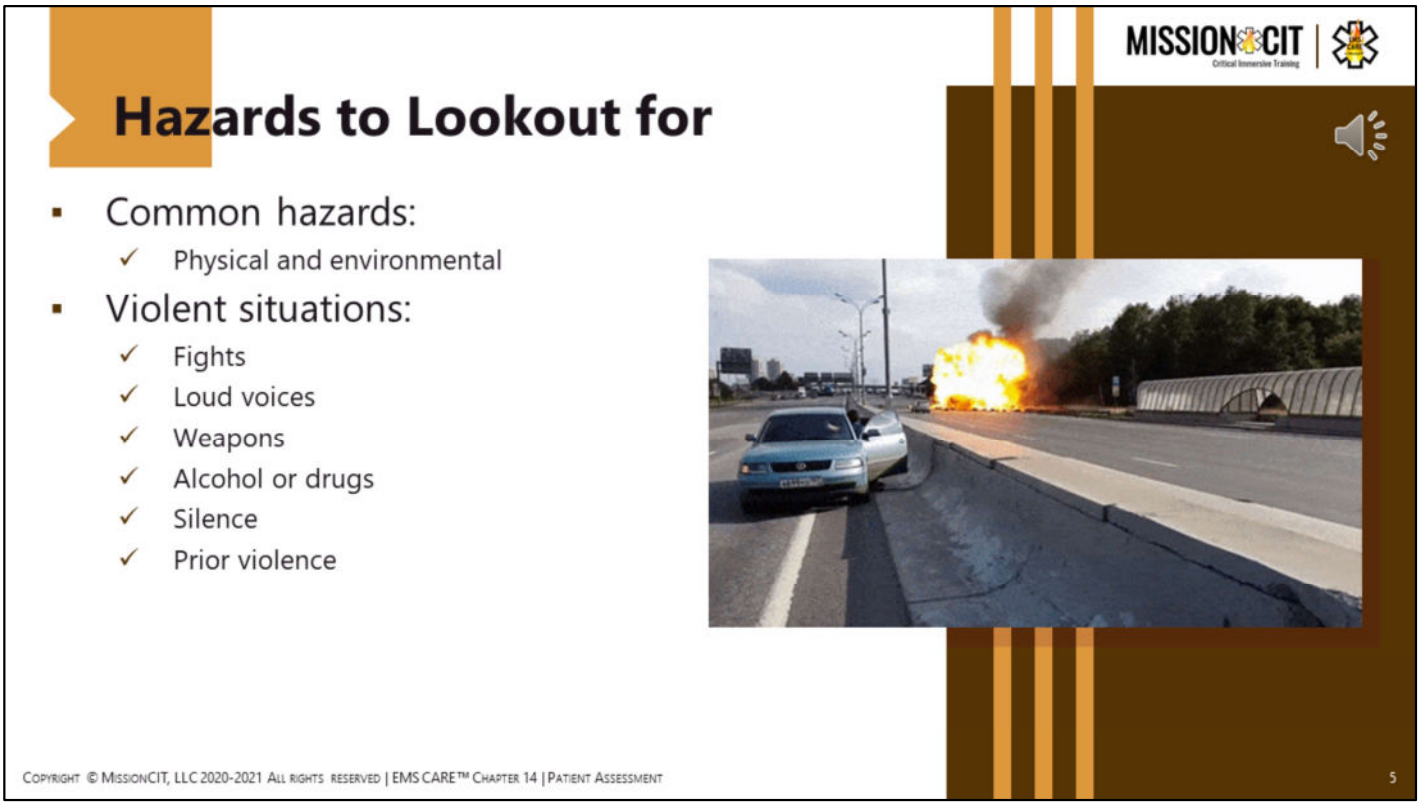
A scene size-up describes the situational awareness that you must have at all times and includes,

- Understand the situation and the prevailing conditions.
- Observe the scene for a minute to understand the potential cause.
- Get clues from the dispatcher's information and combine it with your observation to understand what's going on.
- Note the mechanism of injury. An assessment of mechanism of injury will help you identify injuries "common" to particular situations and can help focus assessment on key subtle life threats.
- To begin identifying the nature of a patient's illness during the scene size-up, you must scan the entire scene. Information may be obtained from the patient, family members or bystanders and the scene.
- Determine the number of patients who need care.
- Decide if you need additional resources.



An important part of scene size-up is to ensure your personal safety. Depending on the situation, the danger can be minor to major, so evaluate before you enter. If you think a scene is potentially unsafe, never enter the scene, and wait for additional resources or law enforcement. Enter the place only after they deem it safe for you to go. Consider body substance isolation (BSI) and always have personal protective equipment (PPE) available at all times.

Consider the environmental conditions and road safety, especially if you're approaching a patient on a roadway.



Some of the common hazards you must watch out for are:

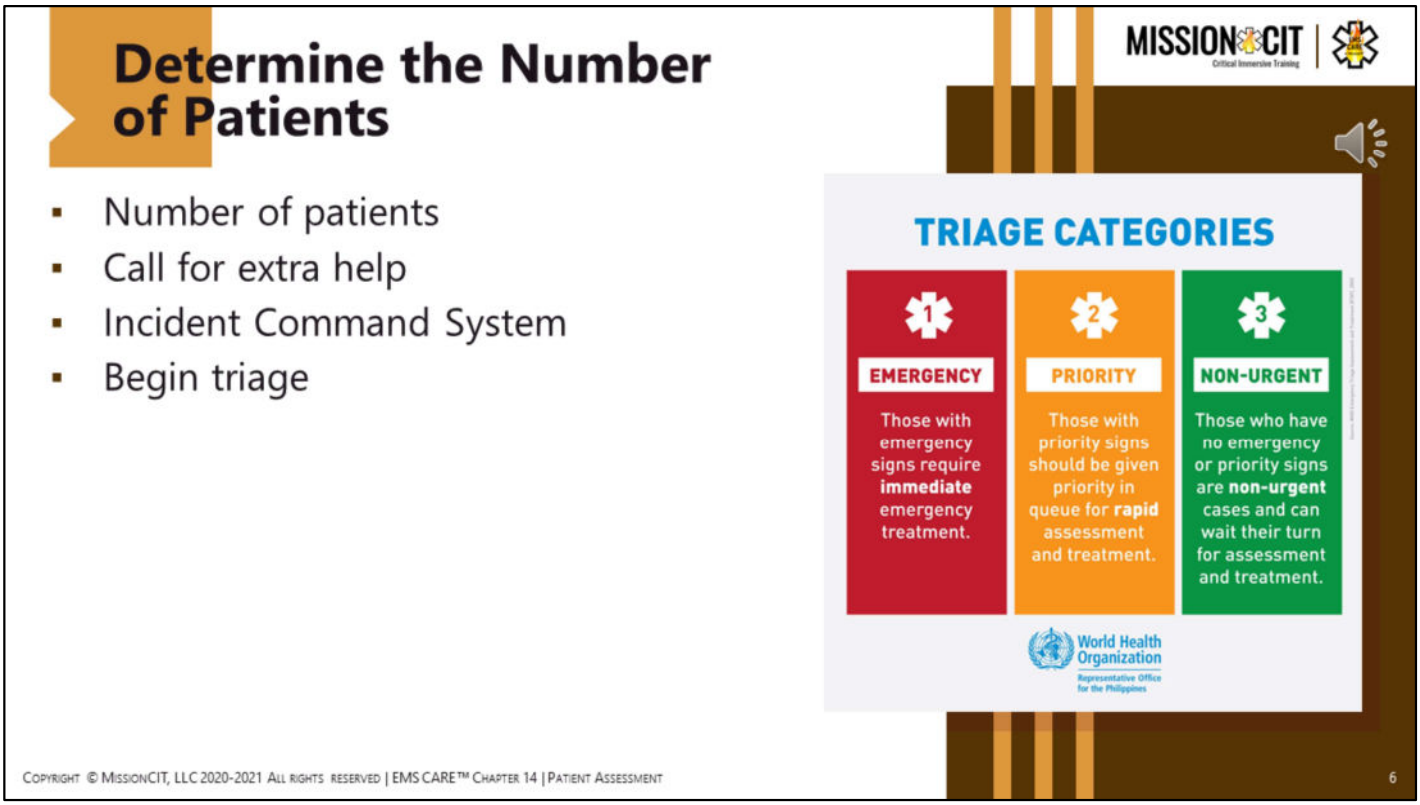
- Environmental
- Physical
- Chemical
- Electrical
- Water
- Fire
- Explosions, and
- Physical Violence

Remember, an emergency can turn violent at any time, so constantly evaluate for the threat of violence. Specifically, look for,

- Fighting or loud voices
- Weapons that are visible or in use
- Signs of alcohol and drugs

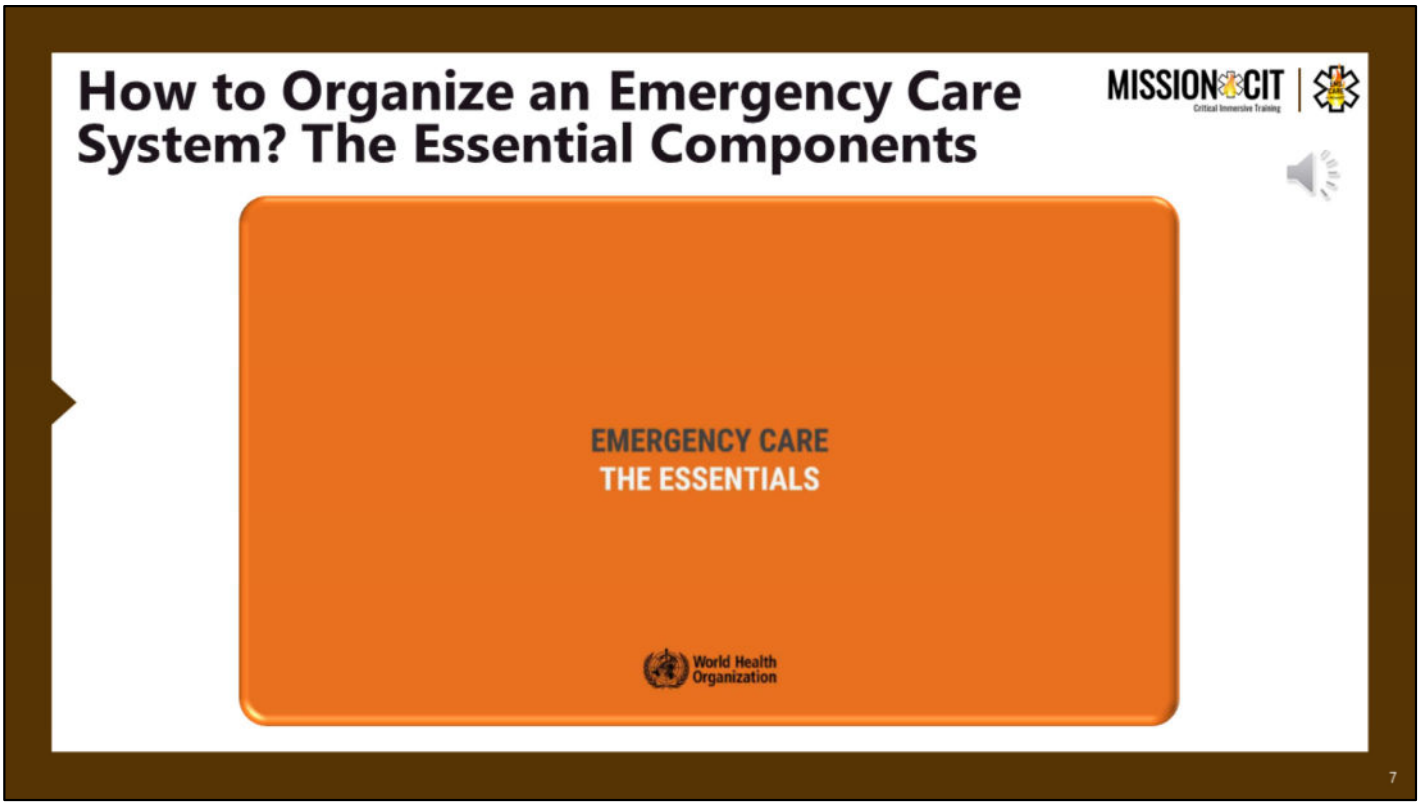
- Unusual silence
- Knowledge of prior violence

If you notice any of these threats, call for help, and leave the scene right away.



Another important element of scene size-up is to assess the number of patients who need emergency care, so you can call for additional resources if needed.

When there are multiple patients, activate the Incident Command System and begin the triage accordingly.



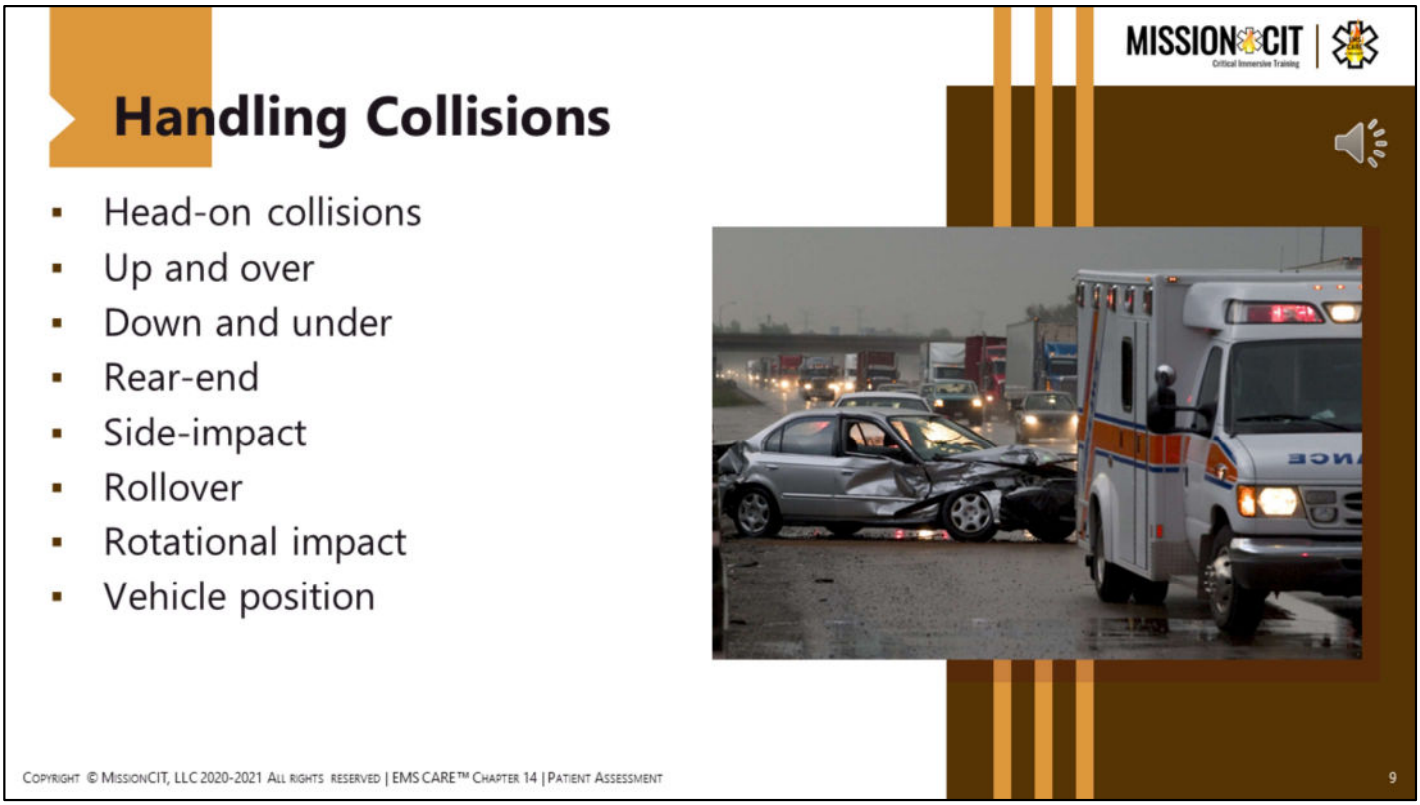
This short video describes the essential components for effective frontline emergency care according to the World Health Organization. Emergency care is a primary point of access to the health system for many people around the world, and an essential part of Universal Health Coverage.



Consider if you need additional help or the presence of specialized resources such as Advanced Life Support, Air medical support, Fire department, law enforcement, etc.

Some of the questions that can help you decide in this regard are:

- Are multiple patients involved?
- Does the scene pose a threat to anyone?
- Are there enough resources to care for the patients?
- Do patients require specialized care?
- Does the situation involve fire or hazardous substances?
- Decide depending on the answers to the above questions.

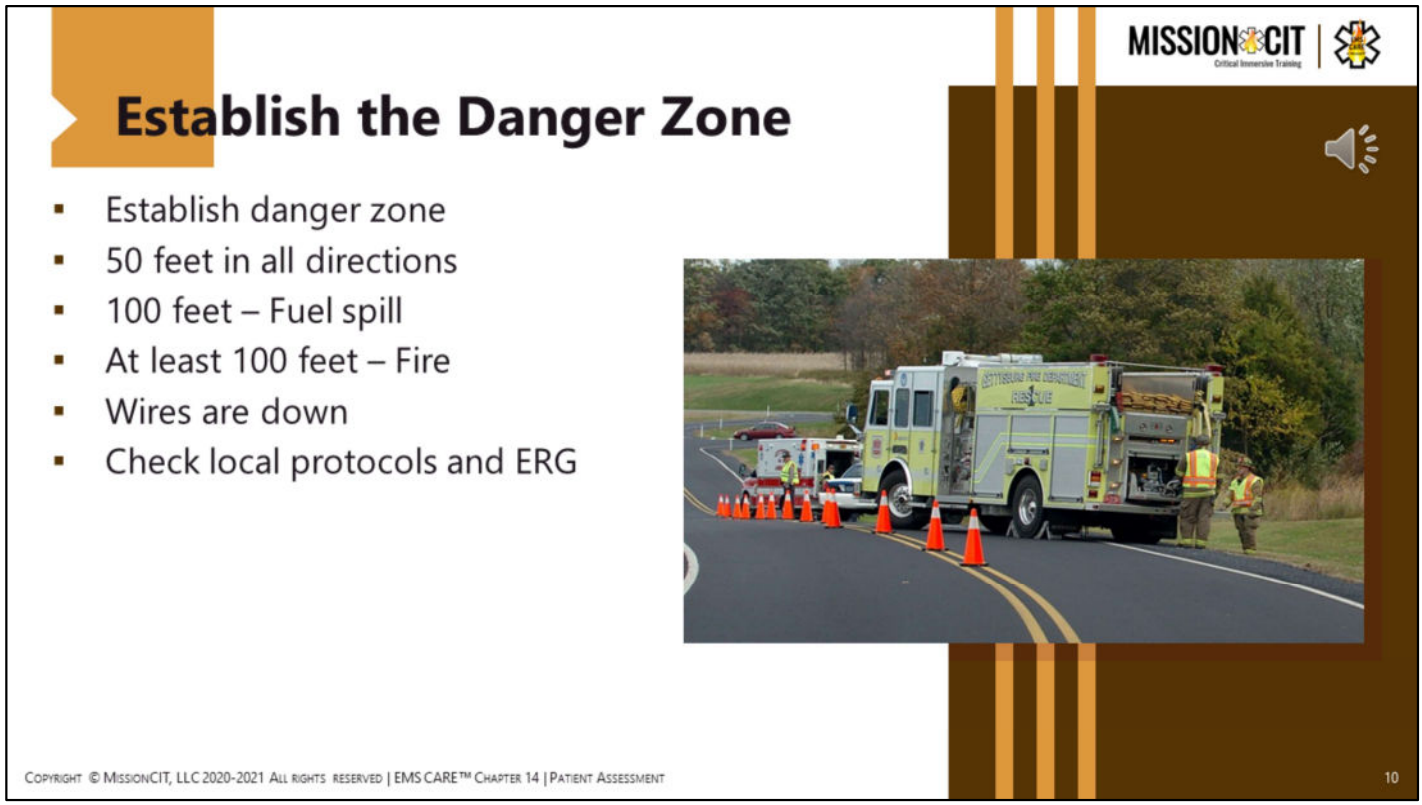


Motor vehicle collisions are a common situation you'll face. As soon as you enter the scene, make a note of the prevailing forces that can cause potential injury to those involved. For example, looking at the exterior damage or the deployment of airbags can help you to suspect the kind of injury to the driver.

Most injuries in head-on collisions fall into two categories. Up and over injury or down and under injury. The up and over injury includes injuries to the head, face, and neck from windshield or sunroof, chest and abdominal injuries from steering wheel impact, and possible lower body injury if tangled in gas or brake pedals. Down under injuries, on the other hand, are those that involve the lower extremities due to a crushing mechanism, entrapment, and dislocation, pelvis injury, and abdominal and chest injury due to crush or the body's position.

The position of the vehicle can also give you clues about the possible injuries, as the initial impact often leads to subsequent impacts. Note that when cars are stuck, they tend to spin. This can cause rotational impact collisions. The initial impact often causes subsequent impacts.

Other types of motor vehicle collisions include rear-end collisions, side-impact collisions and rollover collisions. Assessing the nature of the accident can help you to prepare yourself and the team for appropriate care.



An important aspect of scene size-up is establishing the danger zone in a motor vehicle accident. This is done around the wreckage of a collision and must be at least 50 feet in all directions when there are no apparent hazards. If fuel has been spilled, make it 100 feet from the wreckage and the area of the oil spill.

If the vehicle is on fire, then the danger zone must be at least a 100 feet in all directions. Similarly, when the wires are down, the danger zone is one full span of wires away from the poles to which broken wires are attached.

When a hazardous material is involved, check your local protocols and the Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG).



Falls are another emergency that you may have to handle often. Injuries are more likely when an adult has fallen more than 20 feet or when a child under 15 years of age has fallen about 10 feet or more, typically two or three times the child's height.

As soon as you enter the scene, look at the characteristics of the fall to make a calculated guess of the possible injuries. Some important factors to consider are:

- Height from which the patient fell
- The surface on which the patient fell
- Which part of the patient hit the surface?
- Anything that interrupted the fall

With these words, we come to the end of this lesson and in the next one, Missah will take you through primary assessment.