

Welcome to the first lesson where we will talk about some of the challenges that EMTs face today while executing daily work responsibilities. Though you may be familiar with many of these challenges, still it helps to quickly run through them again.

Structural and Cultural Variations

- Uneven development of EMS Systems
- Lack of federal funding
- No uniform standards
- Reduced interoperability
- Hinders exchange of information



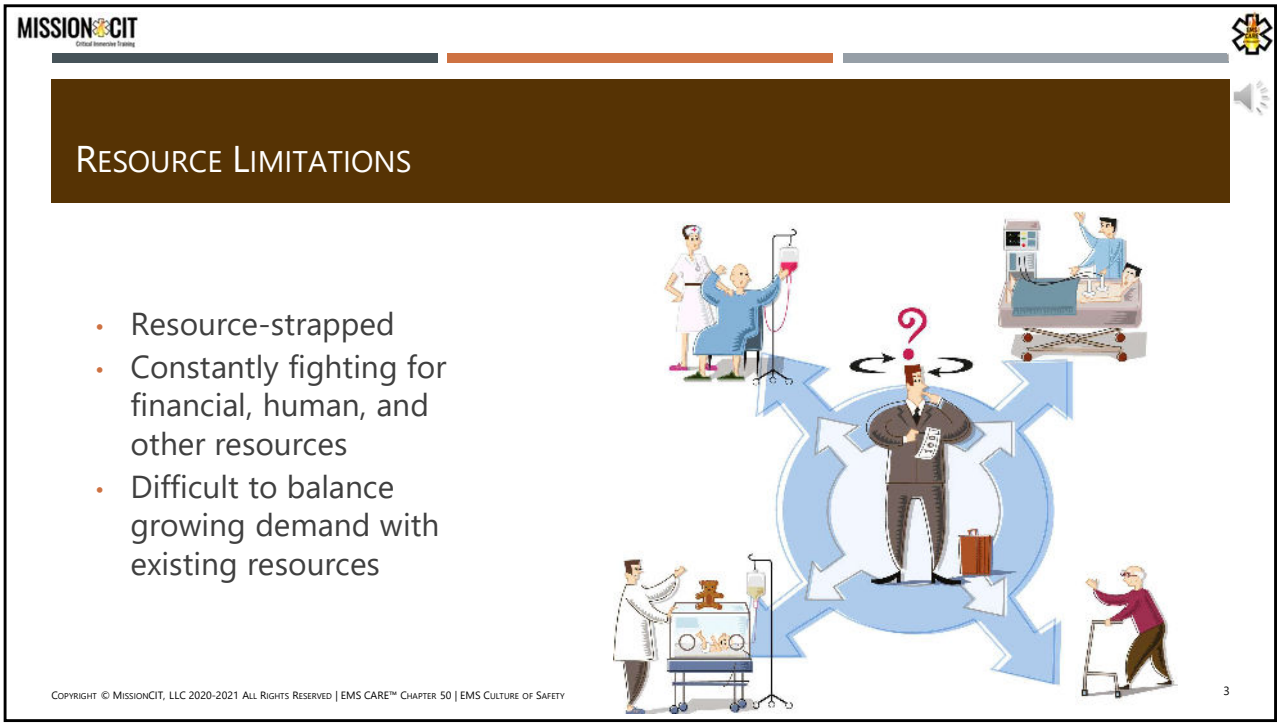
President Lyndon Johnson signing the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act

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How EMS has developed over the last few decades has led to many structural and cultural variations across the country. To step back a bit, federal funding was stopped for EMS in the early part of the 1980s, so the responsibility for managing the EMS fell on the shoulders of states, counties, cities, and even private organizations. Hence, the EMS system developed haphazardly across the country, where each organization has its own rules, standards, regulations, and cultures.

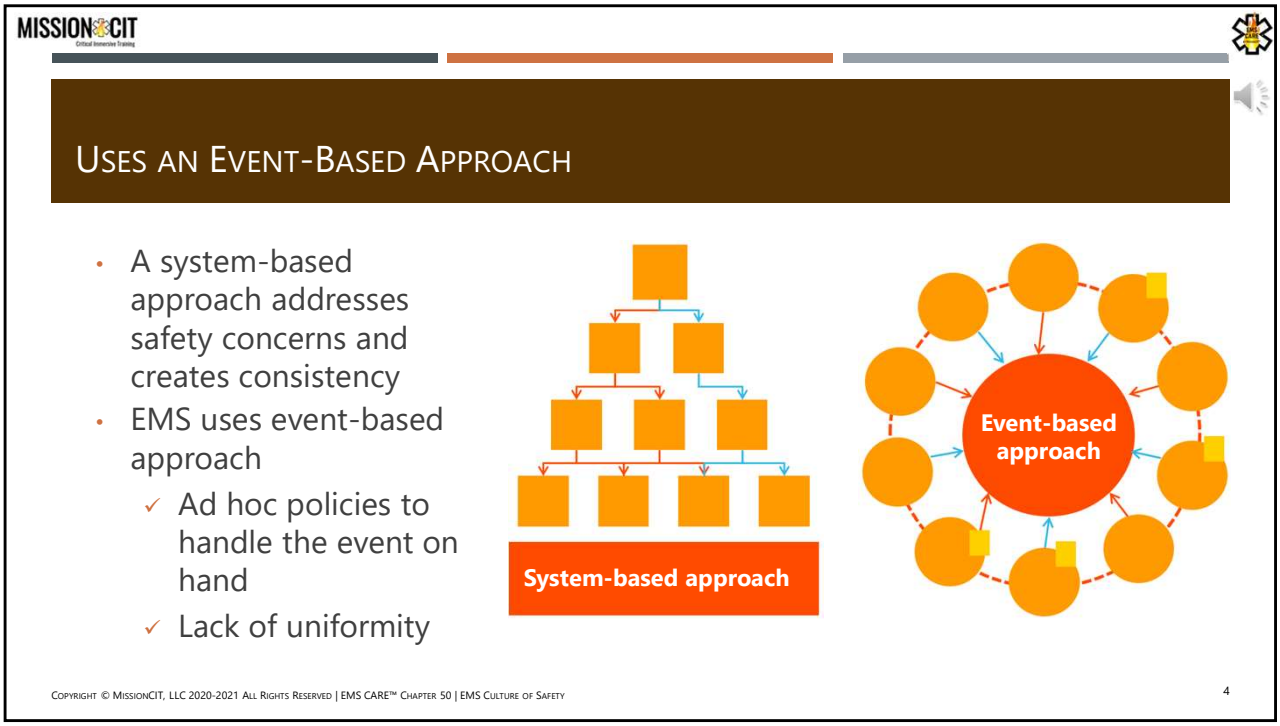
Such vast differences have reduced interoperability

between EMS organizations and have hindered the exchange of data and best practices.



As an EMT, you know how resource-strapped our organization is. More often than not, we're stepping in for someone or working a bit more to cover for a colleague.

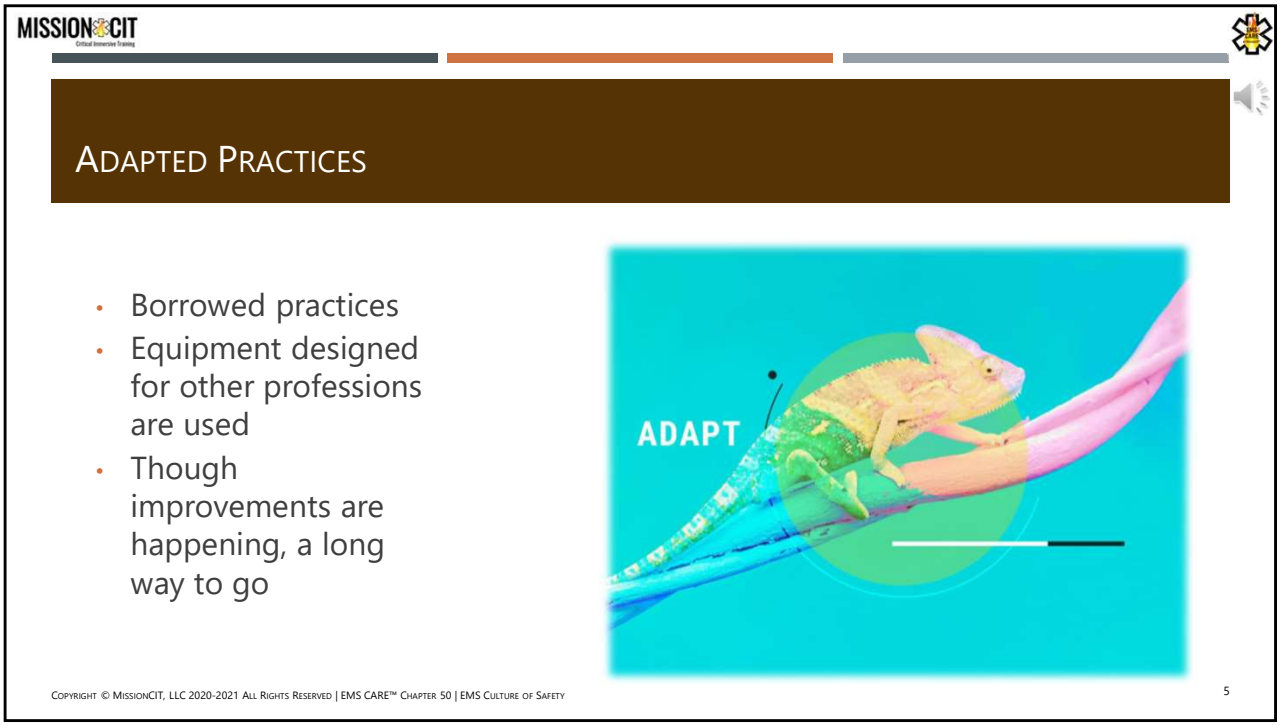
Though our efforts are well-appreciated, it boils down to the fact that EMS organizations are continually battling for financial, human, and other resources. Many heads of EMS organizations have acknowledged that it is becoming increasingly hard to balance the growing demands for EMTs with the limited resources on hand.



Research shows that a system-based approach works best to address safety concerns and ensures uniformity and consistency across organizations. Unfortunately, all EMS systems take an event-based approach.

So, what's the difference? A system-based approach is one where all possibilities and their consequences get documented and included in the process, so the operations and outcomes are equally consistent in any given situation. On the other hand, an event-based approach uses ad hoc policies and processes to handle

the specific event on hand. Hence, there is no uniformity in the process, and this impacts your decision on the field.



The haphazard development of EMS services across the country has been built on practices borrowed from other settings and adapted to meet the EMS operations.

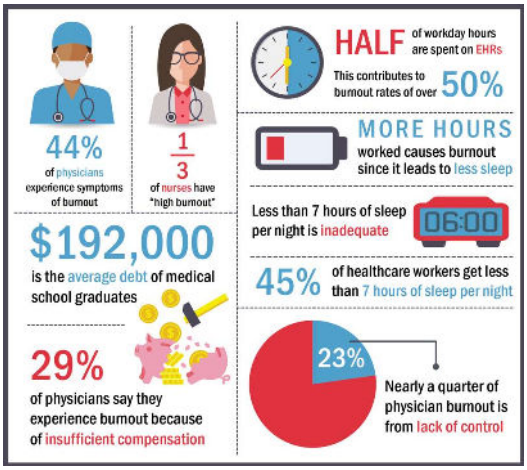
In other words, vehicles and equipment designed for use in emergency rooms, intensive care units, and even mortuaries were adapted for EMS operations.

Though the last few years have seen some improvements in the form of specialized equipment

designed exclusively for EMS field use, still many practices and equipment are not most conducive for pre-hospital settings.

Operational Performance

- Pressure to maintain high levels of performance
- Productivity goals are inconsistent with safety and well-being
- Disconnect between policymakers and field crew



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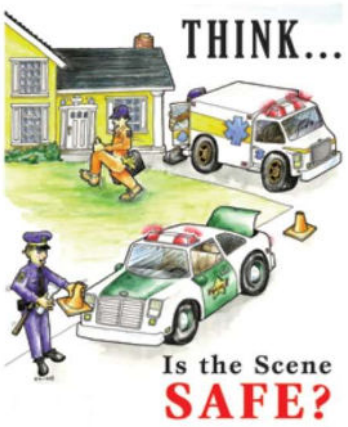
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EMTs are often under considerable pressure to maintain high-performance levels even under the most difficult of circumstances. There are set productivity goals that EMTs have to meet, and this jeopardizes their safety and well-being.

This operational pressure also stems from a possible disconnect between the policymakers and the field crew. The reason being that the decision-makers are less aware of the challenges we face.

Misplaced Beliefs and Perceptions

- Going to any length to protect patients
- Neglect personal safety
- Misplaced beliefs lead to wrong actions
  - ✓ Unsafe driving
  - ✓ Lack of adhere to safe transportation practices
  - ✓ Failure to use PPE
  - ✓ Aggressive treatment choices



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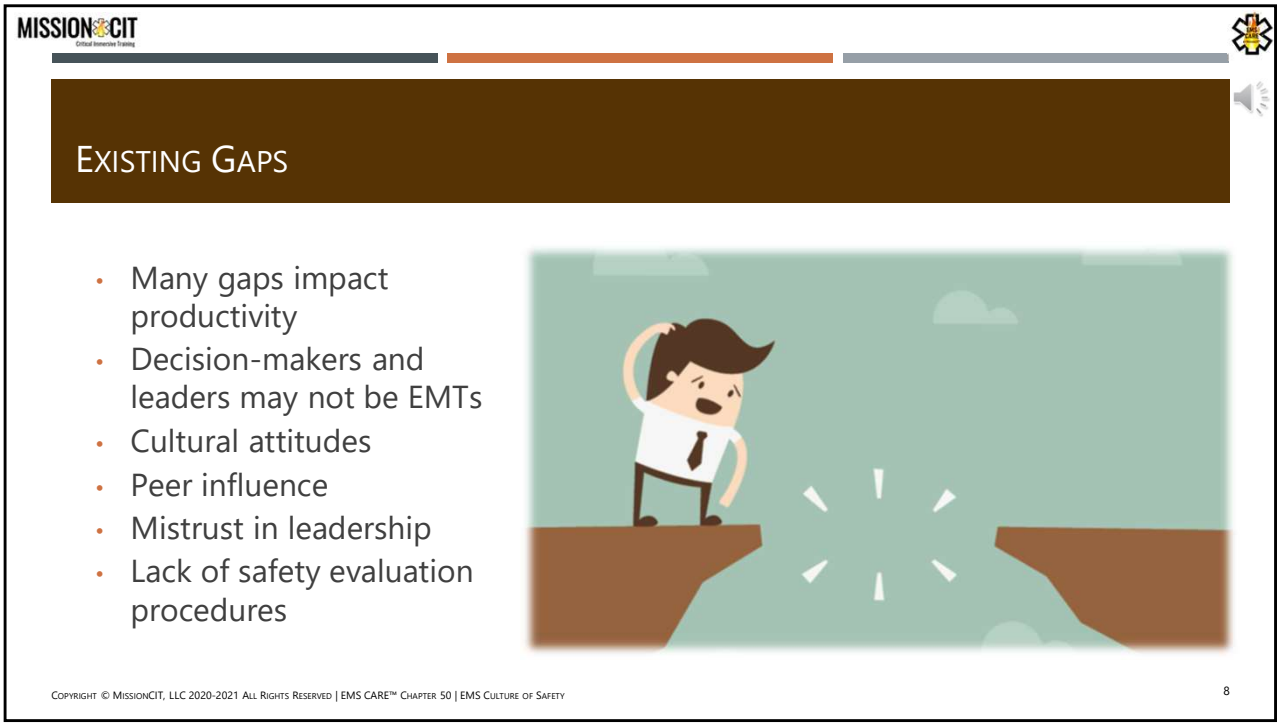
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The general perception of EMTs is that they have to go to any length to protect the patient and provide the best possible pre-hospital care. While this is true to a large extent the personal safety of the EMTs is equally crucial. EMTs must not put themselves in situations that can impact their safety and well-being.

The depiction of EMS in movies and other popular media has further led to the belief that EMTs must do everything to save a patient, which is not necessarily

true in the real world.

Unfortunately, these misplaced beliefs and perceptions lead to wrong actions such as unsafe driving, lack of adherence to safe transportation practices, failure to use protective equipment, aggressive treatment choices, and more. All these backfire at most times and impact our safety.



There are many gaps in EMS organizations, and this impacts our safety and productivity.

- First off, the leaders may not be EMTs or even clinically-trained for that matter, so they may not get a hands-on feel of the operations and requirements.
- Further, there are delays in translating scientific studies to on-the-field actions, this impacts safety as well.
- Cultural attitudes, peer influence, mistrust in leadership, and lack of regular safety evaluation

procedures impact the EMS culture of safety.

With this, we come to the end of this lesson, and in the next one, Justin will take you through the basics of the EMS culture of safety.