

Ambulances need to comply with new regulations

Private ambulance operators will have to comply with a host of new requirements if new regulations become law as the private ambulance operators are unregulated and lack industry standards.



Health Minister Aaron Mokoalele Mokoalele wants to introduce a host of regulations to control private ambulance operators. Image: GCIS

Now a series of strict licensing requirements, proposed in the gazetted emergency services regulations, will change all this if they are adopted.

According to the proposed regulations, ambulance operators will have to, among other things:

- Be licensed;
- Be supervised by an emergency medical services manager;
- Operate from a specific location;
- Have a communications system over which to receive service requests, backed by the ability to manage resources;
- Have sluice facilities for cleaning contaminated equipment and linen;
- Have washing facilities, including medical-waste traps;
- Have all the equipment listed in the regulations;

- Ensure that ambulances are clearly marked as being emergency vehicles.

Operators who do not comply could have their licence cancelled or suspended.

Any operator found guilty of contravening the regulations faces a fine not exceeding R500,000 and/or imprisonment not exceeding five years.

The proposed regulations, which have received a mixed reaction, have been published for public comment within three months.

Private ambulances unregulated



Dr Jonathan Witt says that Aaron Mbotsoaledi has a complete misunderstanding of how private ambulance operators work or are trained. Image: [Wits University](#)

The Chief Executive of the SA Private Ambulance and Emergency Services Association, Oliver Wright, said he was looking forward to the introduction of the new regulations.

He said the multimillion-rand industry had been unregulated for too long at the risk of patients' lives, adding that at the moment there is nothing to ensure that private ambulances were properly equipped or carried registered and adequately trained ambulance staff.

"There is a chance that a patient might die because he or she is not receiving the correct treatment," Wright said.

Emergency medical practitioner Dr Jonathan Witt said the move was well-intentioned but warned that it could lead to a bureaucratic mess.

"It is typical of the Health Minister's seemingly complete misunderstanding of our emergency medical services, their resources and how they function. There are several services doing good work who would cease to exist if this becomes law," he said.

Peter Fuhri, the Department of Health's Director of Emergency Medical Services, said the new regulations were prompted by complaints from the public.

Fuhri said the regulations would allow the government to get a "grip" on the sector.

Source: The Times via I-Net Bridge

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