

""Star of Life" - emergency medical care symbol: background, specifications, and criteria
1979.

[Find this Book Online: https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015075454838](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015075454838)

Digitized by 

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Public Domain, Google-digitized

We have determined this work to be in the public domain, meaning that it is not subject to copyright. Users are free to copy, use, and redistribute the work in part or in whole. It is possible that current copyright holders, heirs or the estate of the authors of individual portions of the work, such as illustrations or photographs, assert copyrights over these portions. Depending on the nature of subsequent use that is made, additional rights may need to be obtained independently of anything we can address. The digital images and OCR of this work were produced by Google, Inc. (indicated by a watermark on each page in the PageTurner). Google requests that the images and OCR not be re-hosted, redistributed or used commercially. The images are provided for educational, scholarly, non-commercial purposes.

Generated at Liberty University through HathiTrust on 2026-02-23 21:10 GMT

HSRI

434/80

"STAR OF LIFE"

EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE SYMBOL



Background, Specifications, and Criteria

U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Office of Driver and Pedestrian Programs, Washington, D.C. 20950

Generated at Liberty University through HathiTrust on 2026-02-23 21:10 GMT
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015075454838> / Public Domain, Google-digitized

PBZVT-EF

HSRI-43480

"Star of Life" - emergency medical care symbol: background, specifications, and criteria.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Driver and Pedestrian Programs, Washington, D.C.

Jan 1979. 12 p. illus.

Report No: DOT/HS 803 721.

IQ Emergency Medical Services
YDR Symbols
YEM Specifications

43480

Preface

This brochure has been prepared for both administrative application and general public information relative to the blue "Star of Life" Emergency Medical Care symbol. Since congressional enactment of the Highway Safety Act of 1966 and its approval of Standard 11 "Emergency Medical Services," the Department of Transportation has vigorously pursued the implementation of a National Pre-Hospital Emergency Medical Care system. The objectives of this program have been to reduce mortality and morbidity among the sick and injured through effective medical intervention and care at the scene of medical emergency onset and during transit to definitive care. This is an entirely new service in the civilian structure of this nation with a new set of standards, concerns, and quality of care for the victims of medical emergencies. It is being emulated internationally. Therefore, it is most appropriate that it be distinctively identified for the benefit of not only those working in this vital service area but also the victims and general public.

43480

Contents

Introduction	1
Design Origin and Meaning	3
DOT/NHTSA Authority	5
NHTSA “Star of Life” Authorization and Criteria	8
Specifications	11
EMS Patches	12

Introduction

American National Red Cross objection and NHTSA investigation in 1973 indicated that use of “a cross of reflectorized Omaha orange on a square background of reflectorized white” violated a Congressional grant to the American National Red Cross of “the right to have and to use . . . as an emblem and badge, a Greek Red Cross on a white background, as the same has been treated in the treaties of Geneva” (33 Stat. 600, 36 U.S.C. S 2, January 5, 1905). In fact, Congress passed Title 18, U.S.C. S 706, Red Cross, which specifically prohibits, with several inapplicable exceptions, the use by any person of any sign or insignia made or colored in imitation of the Greek Red Cross on a white ground. The orange cross previously specified by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is clearly a “colorable imitation” of the Geneva Red Cross under the law of the United States.

The Red Cross controls unauthorized use of its emblem by notifying users of the S 706 prohibitions and relying on their good faith to discontinue use. It believes the Department of Transportation (DOT) criteria violate S 706 as “an insignia made or colored in imitation of the Greek Red Cross,” consisting as it does of an identical geometric figure to the Red Cross utilized in a medical environment.

The most recent Red Cross Treaty Convention, “Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field of August 12, 1949,” 6 UST 3114 (1955), allows peacetime use of the red cross “as an exceptional measure” on ambulances (1) with the express permission of the Red Cross and (2) in conformity with national legislation (6 UST 3114 Art. 44). The Convention was ratified by the United States in 1955, but the use of a red cross by ambulances was not legislated.

It was concluded by NHTSA that it is proper not to further interfere with the organizational identification provided by the Greek Red Cross. Rather, it was considered preferable to adopt (September 23, 1973) a separate symbol which clearly and distinctively identifies emergency care within the total spectrum of the Emergency Medical Care system. The “Star of Life” has already been identified by the medical profession as a medical emergency symbol, and its use encouraged by the American Medical Association. Its use, as provided

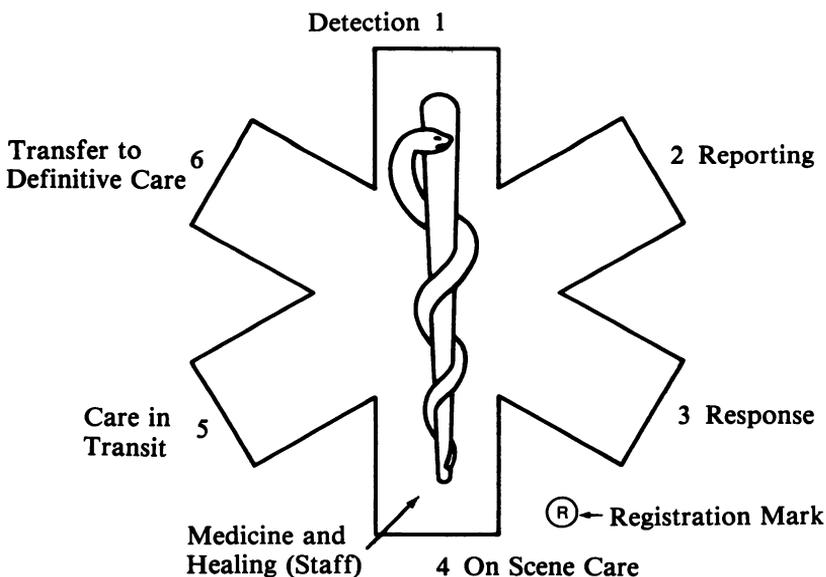
for herein, is also concurred with by the appropriate agency and its advisory council within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (October 25, 1973).

This symbol is applicable to all emergency medical goods and services funded under the DOT/EMS program and criteria. It is also recommended and encouraged that the States employ this symbol for all EMS goods and services which meet DOT criteria for service, or are in the process of upgrading and routinely responding to medical emergencies. Highway safety funds may be expended for the purpose of applying this symbol.

Design Origin and Meaning

Six Barred Cross

The blue “Star of Life” symbol was designed in its specified configuration by Leo R. Schwartz, Chief, EMS Branch, NHTSA in response to the need expressed in the introduction. The six barred cross was adapted from the personal Medical Identification Symbol of the American Medical Association. For EMS the six bars represent the six system functions as indicated below.



Staff of Asclepius (Greek), Aesculapius (Roman)

Asclepius was the Greek god of medicine. In Greek mythology he was the son of Apollo (god of light, truth, and prophecy) and the nymph Coronis. The centaur Chiron taught him the art of healing, but Zeus (the king of gods), afraid that he might render all men immortal, slew him with a thunderbolt. Homer, in the *Illiad*, mentions him only as the skilled or “peerless physician” and further identifies him as the father of Podaleirius and Machaon, physicians to the Greeks in the Trojan War. In later times, however, he was honored as a hero and eventually worshipped as a god. The cult of Asclepius began in Thessaly, but spread to many parts of Greece. Since it was supposed that he effected cures or prescribed remedies to the sick in dreams, the practice of sleeping in his temples became common.

Asclepius was frequently represented standing, dressed in a long cloak, with bare breast; his usual attribute was the staff with a serpent coiled around it. The staff is the only true symbol of medicine. The Caduceus with its winged staff and intertwined serpents, used as a medical emblem by the Military Medical Corps and some physicians, is without medical relevance in its origin since it represents the magic wand of Hermes (in Greek mythology a diety; herald and messenger of the gods; god of roads, commerce, invention, cunning, and theft; patron of traders and rogues; and conductor of the dead to Hades) and Mercury of Roman mythology, often identified with Hermes, who served also as messenger to the other gods and was god of commerce, travel, and thievery.

In 293 B.C., because of the plague, the Romans adopted the cult of Asclepius who became known in Roman mythology as Aesculapius.*

It is considered most appropriate to call attention to the other significant reference to the serpent on a staff associated with healing, as follows:

“Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he recovered.” Numbers 21:9

*Roman Statue of Aesculapius may be found in the Vatican Museum.

DOT/NHTSA Authority

The blue “Star of Life” was adopted and registered as a certification mark applied for in accordance with the Office of the Secretary of Transportation’s Memorandum of September 26, 1972 re: Service Marks and Trade Marks. The Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks registered the “Star of Life” symbol in the name of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on February 1, 1977, under provision of the Trademark Act of 1946. This registration shall remain in force for an initial term of twenty years unless sooner terminated as provided by law.

By Memorandum, dated November 18, 1976, the Office of the Secretary of Transportation approved the “Star of Life” as an exception to DOT Order 1000.3A, Official Seal and Insignia of the Department of Transportation, “to use a symbol known as the “Blue Star of Life” as a Departmental program symbol.

On September 14, 1977, the Administrator, NHTSA, published a memorandum containing authorizations and criteria relative to the use of the symbol for implementation of Standard 11, statewide system development, and achievement of a nationally recognized level of prehospital emergency medical care. Hospital emergency department personnel are included in that category. The States (as defined in the Highway Safety Act of 1966—Amended) and Federal agencies with emergency medical services (EMS) involvement are authorized as agents of the Administrator to permit and exercise supervisory control over use of the symbol. Such control shall be in accordance with the purpose and criteria set forth by the Administrator. These are included herein under “Authorization and Criteria” and “Specifications.” In the exercise of this authority, violations should be brought to the attention of the Federal District Attorney.



Nº 1058022

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION

This is to certify that the records of the Patent and Trademark Office show that an application was filed in said Office for registration of the Mark shown herein, a copy of said Mark and pertinent data from the Application being annexed hereto and made a part hereof,

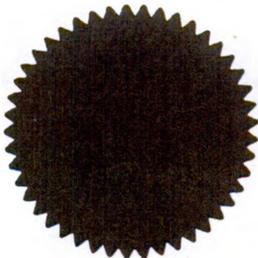
And there having been due compliance with the requirements of the law and with the regulations prescribed by the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks,

Upon examination, it appeared that the applicant was entitled to have said Mark registered under the Trademark Act of 1946, and the said Mark has been duly registered this day in the Patent and Trademark Office on the

PRINCIPAL REGISTER

to the registrant named herein.

This registration shall remain in force for Twenty Years unless sooner terminated as provided by law.



In Testimony Whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Patent and Trademark Office to be affixed this first day of February, 1977.

C. Marshall Dunn

COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS

NOTICE

This Registration will be canceled by the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks at the end of six years following the date of registration, unless within one year next preceding the expiration of such six years, the registrant files in the Patent and Trademark Office an affidavit showing that said mark is still in use or showing that its nonuse is due to special circumstances which excuse such nonuse and is not due to any intention to abandon the mark. A fee of \$10.00 for each class must accompany the affidavit.

16-82421-2

U.S. Cl.: A, B

United States Patent Office

Reg. No. 1,058,022
Registered Feb. 1, 1977

CERTIFICATION MARK

Principal Register



National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
United States Department of Transportation
400 7th St., SW.
Washington, D.C. 20590

For: EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE VEHICLES,
in CLASS A.

For: EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE, in CLASS B.

First use November 1973; in commerce December 1973.
The drawing is lined for the color blue.

The certification mark is used by persons authorized by applicant to certify that emergency medical care vehicles meet U.S. Department of Transportation standards (Class A), the emergency medical care personnel operating the vehicle have been trained to meet U.S. Department of Transportation standards (Class B), or both.

Ser. No. 33,491, filed Oct. 1, 1974.

R. F. CISSEL, Examiner

NHTSA “Star of Life” Authorization and Criteria (NHTSA Memorandum of September 14, 1977)

On February 1, 1977, the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks issued to the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Certificate of Registration No. 1,058,022, for the “Star of Life” symbol as a certification mark. A certification mark is a mark used upon or in connection with the products or services of one or more persons other than the owner of the mark to certify regional or other origin, material, mode of manufacture, quality, accuracy, or other characteristics of such goods or services, or that the work or labor on the goods or services was performed by members of a union or other organization. The registration provides the Administrator, NHTSA, with exclusive legal authority to control use of the “Star of Life” symbol throughout the United States.

The “Star of Life” will be used on emergency medical care vehicles to certify that they meet U.S. Department of Transportation standards, by emergency medical care personnel to certify that they have been trained to meet U.S. Department of Transportation standards, and on road maps and highway signs to indicate the location of or access to qualified emergency medical care services. Any other use is prohibited. Unauthorized use shall be reported to the Administrator, NHTSA, for investigation and legal action as may be indicated.

As a registered certification mark, the “Star of Life” must always be accompanied by the symbol consisting of a capital letter R surrounded by a circle, i.e. ®. This marking shall appear immediately adjacent to the “Star of Life” on all decals, uniform patches, printed material, plaques, pins, buckles, name plates, etc. Where the item consists solely of the “Star of Life” and does not have an adjacent surface or surrounding area (e.g., a lapel pin), the ® shall appear on the reverse side of the item.

The States (as defined in the Highway Safety Act of 1966, P.L. 89-564:80 Stat. 731: 23 U.S.C. 401) and Federal agencies, with emergency medical services involvement, are hereby authorized to permit use of the “Star of Life” symbol as follows:

- a. To identify Emergency Medical Care Vehicles—Ambulances that meet DOT type and equipment criteria.

-
-
- b. To identify medical equipment and supplies for installation and use in the Emergency Medical Care Vehicle–Ambulance.
 - c. To indicate the location of qualified emergency medical services.
 - d. To indicate access to qualified emergency medical services.
 - e. On shoulder patches to be worn only by personnel having satisfactorily completed any of the DOT training courses or an approved equivalent and those personnel who by title and function administer, directly supervise, or otherwise participate in all or a specific part of a National, State, or community EMS program or service in accordance with DOT criteria for Standard 11.
 - f. On EMS personal items such as badges, lapel pins, plaques, buckles, name plates, etc.
 - g. On printed material having direct EMS application such as books, pamphlets, letterheads, plans, manuals, reports, publications, etc.

The following additional provisions apply to the use of the “Star of Life”:

- h. Administrative personnel who may wear the “Star of Life” include program coordinators and staff; project directors and staff; permanent EMS committees, councils, and advisory groups.
- i. Shoulder patches should be a plain blue “Star of Life” on a white square or round background. Function-identifying letters or words are to be printed on bars and attached across the bottom separately. Edges of the basic patch and functional bars are to be embroidered. National Registry patches should be awarded precedence for the Emergency Medical Technician-Ambulance (EMT-A) and Paramedic (EMT-P) when personnel become eligible.
- j. In application of the “Star of Life” to personal items, functional identification and physical characteristics shall be as follows:

For Administrative and dispatcher personnel the “Star of Life” is to have a silver colored edge and the staff of Aesculapius, a silver colored serpent. For EMT’s and other EMS patches, the edge shall be gold in color with a gold colored serpent. A white background for the “Star of Life” is not necessary for these items.

-
-
- k. The shoulder patches, and other EMS patches, may be displayed on uniform pockets. The symbol may also be displayed on collars and headwear. Appropriate dimensions, in addition to those provided in attachment 2, are as follows:

For shoulder patches the "Star of Life" bars should be 3 5/16" by 13/16". Functional bars and lettering as indicated.

Lapel pin and collar symbol dimensions:

Length of "Star of Life" bar	3/4"
Width of "Star of Life" bar	3/8"
Length of Staff	9/16"

Uniform headwear dimensions:

Overall dimensions w/white background	2" by 2"
Length of "Star of Life" bar	1 3/4"
Width of "Star of Life" bar	7/8"
Length of Staff	1 5/16"

When displayed on headwear, functional bar should be 2" by 3/8" width, 1/4" lettering.

For other uses, dimensions may be optional.

- l. Entrepreneurs engaged in the production of goods or publication of printed material are authorized to employ the symbol in accordance with this memorandum. Its registered status must be indicated as set forth above.
- m. Lettering is not to be superimposed on the "Star of Life."
- n. The Staff of Aesculapius is to be white at all times except as indicated in subparagraph j above. When used for highway signing, colors shall be reversed.

Those concerned should be prepared to provide evidence of eligibility to procure, distribute, or display the "Star of Life" as provided for in this memorandum. Authenticated documents, such as certificates, cards, licenses, and official correspondence are examples of such evidence of eligibility.

Specifications



COLOR: Pure Primary Blue (approximate). Above print may be used as sample. Detailed color range data will be provided.

DIMENSIONS:

	SIZES		
	A	B	C
Length of bar	3''	12''	16''
Width of bar	3/4''	3''	4''
Length of staff	2 1/2''	9 1/2''	12 1/2''
White background (if required)	4'' sq.	14'' sq.	18'' sq.

All angles 60°. Deviations in size must be proportionate.

The registration mark R should be centered in the manner indicated above. The diameter of the circle should be 1/4 of the width of the bar. The letter R should not touch the circle.

Location: For appropriate location on the ambulance see the Federal Specifications for Ambulance-Emergency Care Vehicle * KKK-A-1822 GSA-FSS.¹

Note: "Star of Life" symbols are not available from the Department of Transportation. Stencils or decals for applying the symbol must be purchased locally.

¹Available from: General Services Administration (3FRS13S), Bldg. 197, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. 20407.

EMS Patches



EMT-A

EMT-P

EMC-FR

EXTRICATION

DISPATCHER

ADMINISTRATION

Legend

EMT-A —Emergency Medical Technician-Ambulance
 EMT-P —Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic
 EMC-FR—Emergency Medical Care-First Responder

Overall Patch Dimension 3 1/2" by 3 1/2"

Length of staff	2 5/8"
Length of bar	3 1/2"
Width of bar	1/2"
Width of border	1/16"
Height of letters (Ex. EMT-P)	5/16"
Height of words (Ex. DISPATCHER)	1/4"

UMTRI



3 9015 07545 4838



DOT HS 803 721
January 1979

