



## **International Police Mountain Bike Association Board Position Paper – EMS Pannier and Weight Requirements – August 2020**

IPMBA endeavors to keep abreast of changing technologies, methodologies, training requirements and other factors applicable to public safety cycling. This includes best practices for training requirements for public safety cyclists and how those requirements apply to specific departmental procedures.

### **Background**

In May 2014, the IPMBA Board of Directors adopted the *Position Paper on the Use of Backpacks by EMS Cyclists*. At that time, the best practices were determined to be the continued use of panniers and rack bags, with the understanding that there are applications for which backpacks may be a more practical alternative equipment carrying system. This decision was based on the average weight of equipment carried by the typical EMS cyclist; therefore, EMS participants in IPMBA Courses have been required to perform all skills and on-bike testing while carrying thirty pounds (1.36kg) of weight, equally distributed among the panniers and rack bag.

Since the advent of EMS cycling in the mid-1990's, IPMBA has provided training and certification for many types of EMS agencies, which are deployed in a wide variety of situations. Although the majority of traditional EMS bicycle response teams have adopted the pannier and rack bag system, a growing number of pre-hospital medical teams have evolved to meet varying community needs that do not require the same level or amount of medical equipment. For example, many communities have trail systems with terrain that may not be practical for the wide, heavy, pannier-based systems to be effective. Off-road and multi-use areas such as single-track are not conducive to pannier use; therefore, EMS cyclists and those who deploy bicycles for search-and-rescue (SAR) in such communities use alternative equipment carrying methods to access patients and lost persons.

This emerging demographic is seeking the specific type and quality bike-handling training that IPMBA offers, but when they are told they must purchase expensive carrying systems for training that they will not use in the field, they reluctantly seek or develop alternative training that adapts to their situations rather than mandating specific carrying methods and equipment weight. In an effort to better meet the needs of all agencies which turn to IPMBA for best practices for public safety cycling training and operations, IPMBA has evaluated the requirement for training and testing EMS cyclists with thirty pounds (1.36kg) of weight evenly distributed in rear-mounted panniers and top rack bags.

### **Evaluation**

As the use of EMS bicycles has increased, the types of situations and environments in which they are operated have become more varied. In keeping with best practice related to limited carrying capacity, bike medics are encouraged to customize their equipment based upon the population served, the anticipated calls for service, the availability of additional supplies, and the environmental conditions. Advances in EMS equipment have, in many cases, decreased the size and weight of the equipment, which requires less carrying capacity. This, coupled with team specializations and changes to best practices for patient care, has caused many EMS teams to evaluate both the amount and type of equipment carried and, subsequently, the carrying methods. In practice, some have significantly reduced the amount and weight of their equipment and have adopted alternatives to panniers.



IPMBA is responding to these changes within the industry by evaluating the relevancy of the training and testing standard in the current operational climate.

The previously mentioned *IPMBA Position Paper on the Use of Backpacks*, as well as the chapters related to EMS equipment and load placement in *The Complete Guide to Public Safety Cycling*, provide a detailed discussion of various equipment carrying options. The literature clearly discusses the uses, advantages, limitations, and selection criteria for each type of carrying system available to public safety cyclists. IPMBA has stated that EMS providers need to learn how to select, organize and load the equipment they need for safe and effective bike operations. Whatever method is selected for any given situation, it should enable the EMS provider a means to carry sufficient equipment for the assignment, yet allow the rider to maintain safe handling of the bicycle.

### **Administration**

IPMBA is consistently evaluating the best practices for public safety cycling and adjusting the training and skills evaluations to meet the evolving needs of our members. IPMBA recognizes that there is no universally practical carrying method and that the current weight requirement for EMS testing is no longer broadly applicable, considering the evolution of both medical and carrying equipment since this training and testing standard was developed.

When comparing the trends in EMS to trends in law enforcement agencies, similar variations emerge. Law enforcement agencies differ in the amount and type of equipment officers are required to carry and the manner in which they carry it. There is a trend to moving equipment from the waist belt onto load-carrying vests of different types. Police and Security Cyclist Course students are not required to carry a specific amount of weight or a specific list of equipment when performing skills testing during IPMBA Certification training. They are, however, advised to wear and/or carry the equipment required by their respective agencies during routine job specific functions. This is to ensure that they become accustomed to the ways in which their duty gear affects their bicycle handling skills in a training environment rather than in the field. This should be the same for EMS cyclists.

IPMBA recognizes that panniers are most likely still the predominant method of equipment carry amongst EMS cyclists; however, in response to the fast-paced evolution of specialty teams and equipment, it is essential for IPMBA to adapt the training and testing standards to better meet the needs of today's EMS cyclist.

Therefore, EMS Cyclist Course and Instructor Course students will no longer need to complete all on-bike activities and testing with panniers carrying thirty pounds (1.36kg) of weight, evenly distributed among panniers and rack bag. All students will instead be required to complete all on-bike activities and testing with their respective departments' required equipment and load carrying systems, with no minimum or maximum weight requirement. It is the professional responsibility of the students to adhere to this principle and consider the old mantra, "train as you fight, fight as you train" when preparing for and participating in IPMBA EMS Cyclist training.