

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ACADEMIC PHYSICIANS SECTION

Resolution: 2  
(A-24)

Introduced by: Gary M. Gaddis, MD PhD

Subject: Call for Study: Should Petroleum-Powered Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Vehicles in Urban Service Areas be Replaced by Renewably-Powered Electric Vehicles?

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1 Whereas, a 2022 report from the Commonwealth Fund noted that the health care industry  
2 worldwide produces as much as 4.6% of all of global “greenhouse gas” (GHG) emissions  
3 (chiefly carbon dioxide, methane and ozone), while in the United States, the health care industry  
4 contributes about 8.5% of the nation’s GHG emissions;<sup>1</sup> and

5  
6 Whereas, GHG emissions since the onset of the “Industrial Revolution” are widely understood to  
7 have contributed to a progressively increased carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) fraction of the air, and to a  
8 progressively increased average temperature of the surface of the Earth (long-term, non-  
9 human-induced cyclical fluctuations of Earth temperatures not due to human-induced GHG  
10 emissions, such as volcanic activity and other influences notwithstanding); and

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12 Whereas, these elevated temperatures have contributed measurably to increased morbidity and  
13 mortality of human inhabitants of the Earth, not limited to residents of warmer climates and  
14 occupational groups such as outdoor laborers; and

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16 Whereas, these elevated temperatures are also adversely impacting the natural environment  
17 upon which all life depends in ways too numerous to list in this proposed Resolution; and

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19 Whereas, these elevated temperatures are also clearly associated with increased numbers of  
20 extreme weather events; and

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22 Whereas, AMA policy D-135.966, most recently modified in 2022, has declared climate change  
23 to be a public health crisis<sup>2</sup>, such that the goal of 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions  
24 by 2030 and “carbon neutrality” by 2050 are goals endorsed by this policy; and

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26 Whereas, ambulances contribute significantly to health care’s GHG burden, because they are  
27 large, petroleum-powered vehicles; and

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29 Whereas, delivery vehicles powered by renewable energy (electricity) are currently being  
30 deployed in urban areas by the delivery services UPS<sup>2</sup> and FedEx,<sup>3</sup> suggesting an opportunity  
31 exists for the health care sector to replace petroleum-powered ambulances with renewable  
32 energy-powered electric ambulances of a similar size to these delivery vehicles, at least in  
33 urban areas of the United States, as older petroleum-powered ambulances are retired from  
34 service; and

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36 Whereas, UPS is committed to “carbon neutrality” by 2050,<sup>2</sup> with FedEx pursuing “carbon  
37 neutrality” by 2040,<sup>3</sup> inclusive of their large ambulance-sized delivery vehicles, which they are  
38 already deploying for home package delivery; and

1 Whereas, the wide availability of petroleum-powered electrical generators at hospitals and  
2 government buildings should make concerns moot that electric-powered urban ambulances  
3 would become non-operational during widespread electrical outages such as can transiently  
4 occur with hurricanes, tornadoes, derechos and other large weather events; and  
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6 Whereas, the 15-20 minutes that an ambulance is out of service when parked at a hospital's  
7 ambulance garage during the delivery of a patient to a hospital represents an opportunity for  
8 electric-powered ambulances to recharge their batteries, once ambulance bays became  
9 equipped with rapid recharging stations; and  
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11 Whereas, the National Health Service of Great Britain has moved beyond study of the matter,  
12 and has begun to purchase or lease only "Low Emission" and "Ultra Low Emission" vehicles as  
13 of 2021, with the goal that 90% of the NHS fleet will be low-emission or ultra-low emissions  
14 vehicles by 2028, with this specifically including electric-powered ambulances;<sup>4</sup> therefore be it  
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16 RESOLVED, That our AMA study the potential feasibility that our nation's urban ambulance fleet  
17 be replaced with renewably-powered electric vehicles when current petroleum-powered EMS  
18 ambulances become retired from service, with a report back at the next meeting of the AMA  
19 House of Delegates (Directive to Take Action); and be it further  
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21 RESOLVED, That our AMA will forward the results of this study to health care journalists,  
22 hospital regulators, hospital executives, EMS system leaders, and other relevant parties, toward  
23 the eventual implementation of the findings and recommendations that are anticipated to be  
24 reached. (Directive to Take Action)  
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Fiscal Note: Moderate - between \$5,000 and \$10,000

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## REFERENCES

1. Commonwealth Fund “Explainer”. How the U.S. Health Care System Contributes to Climate Change. Issued April 9, 2022. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/explainer/2022/apr/how-us-health-care-system-contributes-climate-change>. Accessed March 15, 2024
2. United Parcel System. Delivering for Our Planet. <https://about.ups.com/us/en/our-impact/ups-sustainability-and-social-impact-report/delivering-for-our-planet.html>. Accessed March 15, 2024
3. Federal Express. FedEx Commits to Carbon-Neutral Operations by 2040. March 3, 2021. <https://investors.fedex.com/news-and-events/investor-news/investor-news-details/2021/FedEx-Commits-to-Carbon-Neutral-Operations-by-2040/>. Accessed March 15, 2024
4. NHS England. Delivering a “Net Zero” National Health Service. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2022/07/B1728-delivering-a-net-zero-nhs-july-2022.pdf>. Accessed March 15, 2024

## RELEVANT AMA POLICY

### **D-135.966 Declaring Climate Change a Public Health Crisis**

1. Our AMA declares climate change a public health crisis that threatens the health and well-being of all individuals.
2. Our AMA will protect patients by advocating for policies that: (a) limit global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius, (b) reduce US greenhouse gas emissions aimed at a 50 percent reduction in emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050, and (c) support rapid implementation and incentivization of clean energy solutions and significant investments in climate resilience through a climate justice lens.
3. Our AMA will consider signing on to the Department of Health and Human Services Health Care Pledge or making a similar commitment to lower its own greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Our AMA encourages the health sector to lead by example in committing to carbon neutrality by 2050.
5. Our AMA will develop a strategic plan for how we will enact our climate change policies including advocacy priorities and strategies to decarbonize physician practices and the health sector with report back to the House of Delegates at the 2023 Annual Meeting.