



Director's Corner

Melissa Kinnaird, Director

The Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) is pleased to release the first of many newsletters to bring information and resources to EMS personnel and agencies. We, as a unit within the Bureau for Public Health, are committed to working in partnership with stakeholders to strengthen and support the delivery of emergency medical services in West Virginia.

Over the past year, the OEMS has developed new partnerships and implemented new initiatives to strengthen our EMS system. We have heard resoundingly that communication is a needed area of improvement. In response, OEMS has initiated the Director's Column on the www.wvoems.org website that is updated monthly. There has been an increasing number of messages shared via Credentialing Information Systems. Information sharing is also occurring at meetings such as Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council and Medical Policy Care Committee. This newsletter will be another tool to further improve communications.

I am very proud to announce that I have been named as the permanent Director for OEMS. I look forward to continuing the good work we have started over the past year. We are moving in a positive direction. Although we have more to do, I am confident we can have the best EMS system in the nation by working together toward this goal.

We are thankful for all you do to promote people in healthy environments and hope you find these newsletters helpful as you go about your daily work.

EMS for Children Program Recognizes a Young Hero



On March 29, 2015, at approximately 2:30 a.m., Zachary Higgins, a 12 year old child with Down Syndrome from Upper Tract, West Virginia in Pendleton County, was with his father when their camper caught fire. Zachary woke to the smell of smoke and fire. Despite Zachary's special needs, he alerted and helped his sleeping father escape the burning camper, which became fully engulfed in flames within minutes.

On July 15, 2015, Zachary's efforts were recognized by a host of West Virginia agencies at the Upper Tract Volunteer Fire Department. The West Virginia Governor's Office presented Zachary with the distinguished Young Mountaineer Award. Kenneth Tyree, Director, West Virginia State Fire Marshal Office, presented an award to Zachary for his bravery and lifesaving efforts, and Dr. Rahul Gupta, Commissioner and State Health Officer for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, presented Zachary with a certificate of recognition on behalf of the Bureau for Public Health and EMS for Children Program for his quick thinking and outstanding response in an emergency situation.

EMSAC/OEMS Joint Survey

The EMS Advisory Council (EMSAC) and OEMS are working together to develop a way to move the WV EMS system forward. One piece of this was the survey that was conducted the month of July. EMSAC and OEMS had nearly 800 responses from the field. EMSAC and OEMS will begin reviewing the responses to determine common ground, identify topics/issues for resolution and develop a strategy to move forward.

The next EMSAC meeting is September 8, 2015. EMSAC and OEMS plans to conduct another survey after the interventions are implemented as a response of the survey results, and will communicate the interventions that are implemented and measure outcomes. The groups will continue to seek feedback on what is going well and what areas still require further improvements.

Communication Boards Added to Ambulances Statewide

In the world of emergency medicine, there is not a routine or typical call. A recent example of the challenges crews face happened when the Kanawha County Emergency Ambulance Authority (KCEAA) Emergency Medical Services (EMS) field providers were dispatched to a 911 emergency call. Upon arrival, the EMS crew quickly determined that the patient had communication difficulties resulting from strokes. The crew was still able to communicate with the patient thanks to



a new tool, the First Responder Communication Board. According to Captain Thomas Bibb, Education Supervisor for KCEAA, “The EMS field providers were not only able to utilize the communication board to determine the patient’s chief complaint, which was unrelated to a stroke, but also the level of pain and onset time.” First Responder Communication Boards had been placed on all KCEAA ambulances just two hours prior to this emergency call.

The boards were purchased by the OEMS, EMS for Children (EMSC) Program. EMSC recognized a need to communicate with nonverbal patients and utilized federal funding to purchase a communication board for every transporting unit in the state of West Virginia. This tool allows an EMS field provider to appropriately assess and treat the nonverbal patient medically and with dignity. The First Responder Communication Boards may be used on pediatric, adolescent or adult patients. “The KCEAA field providers should be commended for recognizing the need and utilizing all available tools to assess and treat their patients,” said Vicki Hildreth, EMSC Coordinator.

For additional information regarding First Responder Communication Boards, please contact Vicki Hildreth, EMSC Coordinator, at Vicki.L.Hildreth@wv.gov or via phone at (304) 558-3956.

Certification Unit Reminders

Recertification time is quickly approaching. Individuals with certifications that expire December 31, 2015, should have their recertification paperwork in by September 30, 2015. This deadline complies with 64CSR48 6.4.a. which states: “apply for recertification during the last year of his or her certification period, but no later than ninety (90) days prior to the end of the applicant’s certification period.” There are more than 8,000 certified personnel currently in the state. Packets submitted after September 30, 2015, may not be processed by the December 31, 2015, expiration date. Please get your packets in early.

With the removal of the hour-for-hour evaluation last fall, the pass/fail EMT test was put back into place. EMTs must pass with a score of 70 to obtain certification. The C3IFT test requires a passing score of 80 and CDT requires a passing score of 76.

Trauma

The new guidelines for Trauma Center verification “Resources for Optimal Care of the Injured Patient: 2014” published by the American College of Surgeons, Committee on Trauma, went into effect July 1, 2015. To be consistent with these new guidelines, the minimum OEMS Priority 1 Trauma Team Activation (TTA) criteria have been updated to include Glasgow Coma Score (GCS) <9 (less than 9) and Gunshot wounds to extremities proximal to the elbow/knee. The WV EMS Special Operational Policy and Treatment Protocol 9103 “Field Trauma Triage” and the WV “Facility Designation Criteria – Minimum Critical Element Summary” have been updated to correspond with these criteria changes and went into effect August 1, 2015. Both will be posted on the www.wvoems.org website.

Upcoming educational opportunities and meetings include:

August 21, 2015	10am to 2pm	Basic Trauma Registry Orientation Workshop	Flatwoods, WV
October 30, 2015	10am to 2pm	Trauma Registry Workshop	Wheeling, WV
October 30, 2015	2pm to 3 pm	Trauma Registrar’s Meeting	Wheeling, WV
October 30, 2015	3pm to 4pm	Trauma Program Manager’s Meeting	Wheeling, WV

For more information please contact Sherry Rockwell at Sherry.L.Rockwell@wv.gov.

Medical Direction

The Medical Policy and Care Committee (MPCC) recently formalized the Protocol Review Process. Proposed revisions to the protocols will be reviewed between January and August of each year. The protocols will be reviewed by the MPCC during the October meeting. The recommendations will be formalized and a roll-out will be performed during the following November and December. As an example, the 2015 protocols are currently being reviewed for potential changes. Those changes will be finalized in October 2015. This will be followed by an educational session (roll-out), and those changes will become effective January 2016. This will be an annual occurrence.

Communications Unit

As of August, OEMS is responsible for the communication equipment at 134 sites, which includes a combination of tower sites and dispatch centers throughout the state. OEMS provides communications to First Responders in all 55 counties through medical command and the state Motorola trunked radio system known as the Statewide Interoperable Radio Network (SIRN).

OEMS assisted Harrison and Marion counties in upgrading their dispatch centers with Motorola 7500 dispatch consoles, which gives them the ability to directly connect to the SIRN system. This means a faster connection to units in the field; prioritized emergency calls that get through no matter how busy the system is; and quick re-routing of calls in the event of an IP network path failure, minimizing lost audio and any impact on the end user.

The Communications Unit continues to grow. OEMS hired three new technicians, Greg Sluss, John Davis, and Jeremy Scott, in addition to a new Project Manager, Patrick McGue.