

## November Website Director Column

November is already here. The start of the holiday season full of fun and festivities. Before we know it, we will be welcoming in 2016!

First, I would like to start out with an update of what has been happening with the EMS Improvement Project. This is a group of agencies that have been working with OEMS on a few priority issues such as EMT-I, legal recognition and continuing/online education. The group had its first meeting on 9/3/15. At that time, workgroups were assigned to each of the focus areas. Those workgroups worked on these areas throughout the month of September. The group reconvened on 10/8/15. OEMS reviewed the recommendations from the workgroups and presented follow up actions. There is a new draft legal recognition policy that will be effective 1/1/16. Training on this and other recert and education policies will be provided to OEMS and field staff during November and December. OEMS will follow the National Registry guidance/lead on the EMT-I certification level. That certification will be continuing at this point in time following what National Registry is doing on this issue. Online education is increasing. A new draft education policy will be effective 1/1/16. It will be included in the training provided during November and December.

I would like to focus this month on talking with those in agency leadership positions. The monthly report that OEMS send out is a very useful tool. It can help you in several operational areas. The items included have been at the request of various providers/agencies. The report can and will continue to evolve as we use it and determine what is most effective for us to monitor. We do not want to gather data that is meaningless. Data must be used to be useful. So we greatly appreciate your feedback in this process.

- Staffing - The monthly report shows you what staff are not certified or whose certification has expired. You can address this issue timely so that your reimbursement is not negatively affected. The report shows what days/times most runs are occurring so you can know when to staff more heavily.
- Time intervals - There was a workgroup that put these benchmarks together several years ago. These are not mandated timeframes and there is no penalty for not meeting these timeframes. This is just what your peers developed as guidelines for comparison.
- Pay attention to the indicators. Some reflect monthly statistics, some items reflect an annual calculation. Therefore, the numbers can be substantially different.
- The general run statistics can be shared with your county commissions or ambulance authority to demonstrate your service delivery and justification for continued and/or growing need in the community.
- The EPCR section can be utilized for tracking and reconciliation of billing to make sure you are optimizing your revenue potential and not submitting duplicate reports.
- The Performance Improvement section can be utilized for tracking PI cases to ensure that your agency has loop closure and we are able to take full advantage of this process for improving our practices.

Another area I would like to focus on with agency leadership is safety. NAEMT has some good information that I would like to share. We see every day where an EMS crew is attacked or subject to some kind of violence or involved in an ambulance crash. We need to take action to ensure our crews go home at the end of every shift.

- Communicate - Not just with patients, but with crew members. You need to speak up when you see something that doesn't seem right. Poor communications causes mistakes and mistakes cause accidents.
- Maintain situation awareness - Be sure to wear appropriate safety gear and keep on eye on what is going on around you.
- Take care of your tools - Your vehicle is your living. Respect it and take care of it. Conduct your safety and equipment checks appropriately to ensure proper operation when needed.
- Drive like a professional - Get in the habit of just driving. Driving during emergency situations is difficult. You are responsible for the safety of your patient, crew and the community. Don't cause an accident that could be prevented by just paying attention and not being distracted. Put down the phone, don't text, don't eat, just drive.
- Watch your back - Know how to lift safely and make sure you have enough help to keep from hurting your back. Statistics show that one out of every four EMS workers will suffer a career-ending back injury within the first four years of service. Take care of yourself.
- Protect yourself from violence - You are dealing with patients and their families during very high stress situations. These situations can be difficult if those involved don't understand what is going on. If you are not able to verbally de-escalate a situation, get out as soon as you can.
- Take care of your body - It is difficult to eat properly while working a shift. Make sure you get enough rest. Planning ahead can help so that you aren't overtired which can lead to injuries.