



Special points of interest:

- Last Call Memorial Quilt
- Rural Provider Survey
- EMSC Performance Measures
- Diazepam Auto Injectors
- Upcoming Events
- Jessica Lunsford Act
- MQA

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Last Call Memorial Quilt

Retired Officer Dee Dee Serpas, of LaPlace Louisiana, has focused her life since October 2001 on honoring the first responders who lost their lives in the 9-11 tragedy. Serpas retired from the police department in East Jefferson Levee, which was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. During Katrina, she lost a few dozen patches and all but one article about the quilt. Since the hurricanes, public awareness about the need for first responders has increased and the quilt recognizes those that put their lives at risk and care for others on a regular basis.

A steady stream of patches have been sent to her since the inception of the project, but it still has a way to go before it is completed. She is the sole person who sews every patch on the quilt, but has received donations from various organizations to keep the quilt making process going.

Serpas has sent over 400 letters and CDs with pictures of the quilt since the hurricane to departments from all over the USA and recently one of those letters and CDs arrived at the Bureau. The Bureau of EMS hopes that agencies throughout Florida will support Dee Dee Serpas in her quest to complete the "Last Call Memorial Quilt."

The quilt measures over 30 feet long and eight feet wide, contains 1,700 patches from police, fire, EMS and other departments across the country, and world. Panel one of three is complete and panel 2 is currently in the works and Serpas hopes eventually to display the quilt at various locations across the country. In the spring of this year, it was displayed at the Louisiana Governors Mansion for EMS Day. She said she would especially like to have it displayed at Disney World and Ground Zero, where it would be a fitting addition to the memorials currently being constructed.



"I will bring it wherever I am invited," she said.

Please help retired officer Dee Dee Serpas honor EMS agencies by sending her your agency's patch.

For more information about the "Last Call Memorial Quilt" log on to www.finalwatch.net. Patches and other correspondence can be sent to 71 Shearwater Dr, LaPlace, Louisiana 70068 or email Dee Dee at lonewolfdeedee@aol.com.

Thoughts from the Field:

FAREMS Completes Needs Survey

Submitted by Tracy Burger

As we all know, emergency medical service is a vital component of the continuum of health care for all persons. But in rural areas, EMS is of even greater importance in this continuum due to the limited availability of hospitals and other health care providers in near proximity. In many rural areas, EMS is the only source of medical care available on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis. The provision of timely and quality EMS in rural areas is a difficult challenge for these areas that lack the tax base to maintain and support highly trained staff and increasingly technical and expensive equipment.

The Florida Association of Rural EMS Providers (FAREMS) is an alliance of rural Florida EMS agencies that was formed for the purpose of assisting these agencies in improving their capability to provide prompt, quality emergency medical response to the citizens they serve. Currently supported by a federal Rural Health Network Planning grant, FAREMS has recently completed a survey of rural EMS agencies in the state. This survey was prescribed as a first step in better understanding the needs of rural Florida EMS providers and to assist FAREMS in determining future direction. The findings, though not significantly different from rural EMS agencies across the country, provide a basis for FAREMS to begin understanding and addressing the priority needs of rural Florida EMS providers.

Ask the Director

Dear Colleagues:

For the past several years, the Bureau has been fortunate enough to have received federal partnership grant funds from the Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau to support Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) programs statewide. With those funds, the Bureau has been able to provide pediatric related education and training resources to all 264 EMS provider agencies. In fact, plans are currently underway to provide Pediatric Education for Prehospital Professionals (PEPP) courses statewide.

The bureau recently submitted a new, competitive three-year EMSC federal partnership grant with an anticipated funding range of \$115,000 per year for three years. In developing the grant, EMSC staff were required to consider newly established national EMSC performance measures. The purpose of the EMSC Program performance measures is to document activities and accomplishments of the Program in improving the delivery of emergency services to children. Additionally, the information from the measures will provide guidance to the Program on future areas for improvement.

With your help, we can ensure these measures are addressed and met, thereby resulting in successful future grant opportunities. To access the national EMSC performance measures visit <http://www.fl-ems.com/EMSC/EMSCHome.html>. Also, for your consideration, Pediatric emergencies should be reviewed constantly in your individual QM programs.

Thank you and Happy New Year to You and Yours,

Don Bennett

Did you know that 5,800 people a holiday season end up in U.S. emergency rooms because of decorating injuries?

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The FAREMS 2005 Inventory of Services survey was distributed to 42 EMS agencies in Florida's 33 rural counties (defined as having less than 100 persons per square mile). Twenty surveys were completed and returned for a response rate of 47.6 percent. Highlighted below are four priority needs/issues that surfaced from the survey.

Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Staff

Seventy percent of FAREMS survey respondents indicate their biggest need is additional personnel, 55 percent indicate a need for a retention program, and 45 percent state they need a recruitment program. Merely 30 percent of survey respondents acknowledge they have an active recruitment and retention program, and half rate their potential for recruiting qualified staff in their community as "poor."

In 2004, survey respondents report an average of 5.1 staff resigned at each agency. Half of survey respondents indicate the reasons for leaving were money. In fact, low pay and minimal benefits are the biggest barriers to recruiting and maintaining qualified EMS staff in rural counties. Some of Florida's rural emergency medical services still pay wages barely above minimum wage. One source, www.rescuehouse.com, reports average Florida paramedic/EMT salary as \$12.63/hour, while the Florida Bureau of EMS estimates average rural Florida paramedic/EMT salary of \$6.50/hour—nearly half of Florida's average.

The near proximity of Florida's rural counties to urban areas allows EMTs and paramedics living in rural counties to commute to work in nearby urban centers. Often, newly certified professionals will gain experience in rural counties and then seek employment at urban agencies where salaries are higher and benefits are significant.

Equipment Needs

Forty-five percent of survey respondents indicate they need additional equipment and cite "lack of funding" as a barrier to obtaining the equipment they need. While some state grant funding is available to Florida's EMS agencies for equipment, rural providers must provide matching funds for the limited amount of funding or compete with urban EMS agencies for other grant sources.

Training/Continuing Education

Nearly 90 percent of FAREMS survey respondents indicate they would like to become more advanced in the level of service they provide. Forty percent of these respondents indicate funding/money was a barrier in doing so. In fact, cost-effective, readily accessible training and continuing education opportunities for EMTs and paramedics serving rural Florida are largely unavailable. The small numbers of staff at rural EMS agencies creates difficulties in scheduling coverage to allow staff time off for training at remote sites. In some areas, EMS personnel are so limited that the agency director is required to staff ambulance vehicles to replace employees that call in sick or attend outside training or continuing education.

In addition, 44 percent of FAREMS survey respondents report they do not use distance learning for continuing education but indicate they believe they could recruit more successfully if distance learning were available for basic EMT and first responder training.

Medical Instruction

Medical instructions en route to the hospital can be vitally important in a patient's care. Dispatchers with professional training in how to handle medical emergencies can save lives and lessen the burden and stress on EMTs and paramedics. Nearly 45 percent of FAREMS survey respondents indicate that medically-approved pre-arrival instructions are not received from their dispatch center, and of those that do receive instructions, 20 percent indicate that these instructions are not adequate.

Another problem is lack of coordination among service providers when it comes to treatment. Currently, each rural EMS agency has its own unique treatment protocols, which is problematic when transporting patients across county lines to access hospital or trauma care. Medical directors are reluctant to accept

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Did you know that men are more likely than women to get hurt during the Nov. 1 - Jan. 31 holiday season?

**Mailing address:**

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Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1738**

Physical address:

**4025 Esplanade Way, 3rd Floor
Tallahassee, Florida 32311-7829**

Office Hours:

Monday - Friday

8:00a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

excluding state holidays.

Telephone: (850) 245-4440

E-mail: DEMO_EMS@doh.state.fl.us

Web: www.fl-ems.com

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responsibility for EMS providers from other jurisdictions, because of unfamiliarity with the standard operating procedures. Lack of resources for medical director backup makes it difficult to secure coverage on weekends and nights.

In response to some of these issues, FAREMS intends to:

- Increase the number of rural EMS providers in the state that have an active, successful recruitment and retention program. FAREMS is developing a written guide that rural EMS managers can use as a reference, based on national best practices research and other rural health care provider models. Management leadership training and a public relations program promoting rural EMS and raising public awareness of rural EMS issues are also parts of this program.
- Coordinate a group purchasing program for rural providers to lower costs of equipment and supplies.
- Improve salary of rural EMTs and paramedics through a public relations plan and appeals to county officials. (Most rural EMS agencies operate under the authority of county commissions.) Offer financial assistance to rural EMS agencies for professional emergency medical dispatch training and distance learning.

FAREMS was organized for the purpose of improving the timeliness and quality of EMS response in rural Florida communities. While EMS organizations in other states have formed regional cooperatives to assist EMS providers, this is the first statewide network organized specifically to address the issues of rural EMS providers. For more information about FAREMS or to receive a copy of the survey report, please contact Tracy Burger at tburger@wellflorida.org.

EMS Providers Supplied with Diazepam Auto Injectors

The Office of Emergency Operations, in conjunction with the Bureau of Pharmacy, recently provided Diazepam auto injectors to licensed ALS EMS providers in Florida for placement on each EMS response vehicle. The Diazepam auto injectors are to be used exclusively for treating first response personnel in the event of seizures after exposure to a nerve agent, with any residual Diazepam auto injectors being available for patients who may have also been exposed. Dr. Joe Nelson, State EMS Medical Director, followed this by distributing a letter to all EMS medical directors urging them to include Diazepam auto injector education in their preparedness training plans. Dr. Nelson noted that the availability of the Diazepam auto injectors is another line of defense to ensure that our first response personnel are protected and that appropriate education regarding their use is essential. To assist providers in incorporating this component into their training plans, several of Florida's colleges have been proactive in developing auto injector training resources. These resources are available through the state EMS Internet website at www.fl-ems.com, under Testing and Training.

Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Federal Partnership Grant - 2006-2009

The bureau recently submitted a new, competitive three-year EMSC federal partnership grant. The range of funding is anticipated to be up to \$115,000 per year for three years with an award date of March 1, 2006. In developing the grant, EMSC staff considered the following program challenges: meeting newly established national EMSC performance measures; establishing policies for prehospital training, education and protocol development; and developing Florida's capacity to obtain EMS and pediatric specific data (NEMESIS) to document the status and progress of emergency care in Florida. In addressing the challenges presented, the proposed partnership grant goals will focus on improving the capacity of Florida to deliver effective pediatric emergency care by integrating pediatric issues into the EMS system and developing a statewide patient level data collection system. This will serve to establish permanence of the EMSC program in the EMS system.



Mark Your Calendars

**January:**

- The next of the EMS Advisory Council will be held on Friday, January 27, 2006 in Jacksonville. The information table will be open on Wednesday, January 25, 2006.

February:

- Rule Development Workshop regarding COPCN to be held in Sanford on February 28, 2006. Location and time to be posted on the Bureau's list serve and published in the Florida Administrative Weekly (F.A.W.).

March:

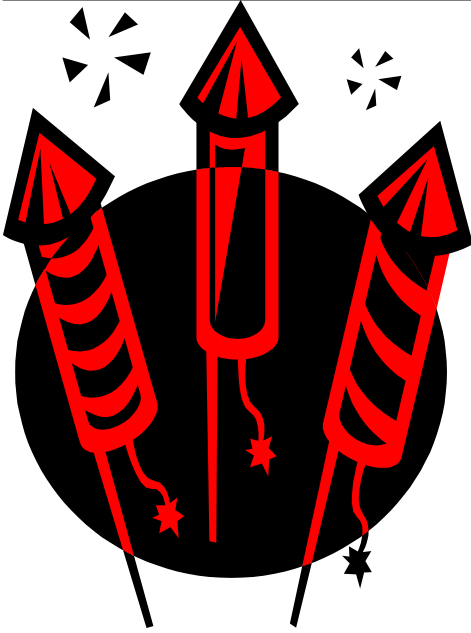
- Written comments regarding proposed 401 changes are due by April 12, 2006. The Legislative Committee for the EMS Advisory Council will be discussing the proposed changes in a conference call prior to April's meeting. The date and time will be posted on the Bureau's list serve.
- County grant applications are now being accepted. Only Boards of County Commissioners are eligible to apply for these county grants. Completed applications and county resolutions must be received by March 31, 2006.

EMS Community Forum

The Jessica Lunsford Act was passed by the 2005 Florida Legislature and signed into law by Governor Bush following the assault and murder of Jessica Lunsford in Homosassa Springs, Florida. Part of the Act will require contractual personnel that shall include any vendor, individual, or entity under contract with the school board to undergo certain screening criteria. The Bureau is being proactive and is researching this matter prior to next year's football season when we feel this may be an issue for EMS personnel stationed at school sporting events. We have identified members of the community that may be able to assist us in the research and development of a future article about this subject. We also ask other members of the community to provide us their feedback on this issue. Please contact Lisa Walker at Lisa_Walker2@doh.state.fl.us with any questions or suggestions.

Having problems and can't get an answer? Get feedback from other members of the EMS community.

You may submit questions that may appear in the next EMS Community Forum by emailing DEMO_EMS@doh.state.fl.us.



Important Information
Regarding a Change in
Services for EMT/
Paramedics

Written licensure verifications and requests for copies of public records are now being handled by the Client Services Unit of the Division of Medical Quality Assurance. If you, or your employer, need to verify the status of your licensure and licensure history in Florida or want to obtain a copy of your licensure application or disciplinary records, please follow the instructions below.

Written licensure verifications – submit a written request to:

DOH/MQA/Client Services
 Bin C01
 4052 Bald Cypress Way
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-3251
 ATTN: Licensure Certification

Licensure Public Records – submit a written request to:

DOH/MQA/Client Services
 Bin C01
 4052 Bald Cypress Way
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-3251
 ATTN: Public Records-Licensure

Discipline Public Records – submit a written request to:

DOH/MQA/Central Records
 Bin C01
 4052 Bald Cypress Way
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-3251
 ATTN: Public Records-Discipline

If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact the Client Services Unit by calling 850-245-4191 and following the prompts.

Happy New Year!
2006

Together, as we collectively promote and protect the health and safety of all people in Florida, we count our blessings for the love and support of our family and friends; the outpouring of support and assistance we received in Florida and provided to our neighboring states during the seemingly endless chain of storms; and for the brave service men and women who defend our freedoms at home and abroad. We hope you all had a safe and happy holiday and wish you all the best for the New Year!

The Bureau of Emergency Medical Services