

ALASKA COUNCIL ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
MINUTES - Thursday, February 3, 2011

Call to Order:

Roy Sursa, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at **8:35** a.m.

Welcome and Introductions:

ACEMS Members in Attendance:

Ron Bowers	Roy Sursa
John Dickens	Mary Leemhuis
Don Hudson, DO	Karen O'Neill, MD
Danita Koehler, MD	

State Staff in Attendance:

Shelley K. Owens, EMS Unit Manager	Kerre Fisher, Dep. Dir. DPH
Lee Parham, EMS Training Coordinator	Chris Laborde, Preparedness Unit Manager

EMS Regional Staff in Attendance:

Sue Hecks, Executive Director, Southern Region EMS Council, Inc.
Aggie Jack, EMS Director, Maniilaq EMS
Dave Potashnick, EMS Regional Director, North Slope Borough Fire Department
Skip Richards, Chugachmiut Corporation
Dave Rockney, IREMSC
Louis Murphy, EMS Director, Norton Sound Health Corporation
Brian Lefferts, EMS Director, Yukon-Kuskokwim Region

Liaison Representative Members in Attendance:

Frank Sacco, MD, Chair, Trauma Systems Review Committee
BJ Coopes, MD, Children's Hospital, Providence Alaska Medical Center
Cindy Cashen, Director, AK Highway Safety Office
Ken Zafren, MD, State EMS Medical Director

Others:

Mark Johnson, Chair, EMS-C Advisory Committee
Jayne Andreen, Section of Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion
Janice Gray, Section of Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion
Mike Lesmann, Special Assistant to the Governor
Robert Tanner, DMVA
Jim Foster, Big Wild Heart of Alaska
Jeff Tucker, AK Fire Chiefs' Association

The Minutes from the October 7-8, 2010 meeting and the agenda for February 3-4, 2011 were approved.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, LIAISON MEMBERS AND STAFF

Executive Committee Report (Roy Sursa)

There have been no updates since the last ACEMS meeting in October. John Dickens reported that the Interoperable Communications Committee went from monthly to quarterly meetings. Two new radios which are more budget-friendly are being tested. DOD stopped funding 12 remote sites and no one has yet offered to take them over.

Motion: To create an ACEMS subcommittee on communications which includes representation from the EMS Regional Councils.

Action: Passed.

Section of Emergency Programs Report (Kerre Fisher)

Sally Abbot is no longer with the State of Alaska. The position for a new Section Chief has been posted recruitment has been difficult. If they cannot fill the position, the job classification will be changed. The Section is still working on the interrelations among the three units: EMS, Preparedness, and Trauma. Kerre is concerned about the staff turnover. They are struggling with finding funding and are looking for other grant opportunities. John Dickens suggested to not limit the Section Chief to registered nurses.

Chief Medical Officer/Public Health Director (Dr. Ward Hurlburt, MD)

Dr. Hurlburt agreed with Kerre Fisher that there are some difficulties regarding the EMS personnel system and explained that a deficiency of \$1.3 million led to the consolidation of the three programs. They have made great progress with regard to the Trauma Registry which will provide statewide data. Another huge breakthrough is the establishment of 16 Level 4 locations. Dr. Hurlburt questioned the fact that Level 5 locations do not report to the Trauma Registry or receive funding. Dr. Koehler stressed the importance of Level 5 locations in order to have a comprehensive trauma system. If gaps in the access of care are identified, justification is created. Frontier clinics need funding- not just the certifications. Dr. Hurlburt thanked everyone for their patience and hard work despite the existing problems within the Section. John Dickens stated that there is no unified approach to the Medevac system and that some patients do not get medevaced. Dr. Hurlburt replied that the State as well as the private payer might have contracts for another carrier in place. He assured that Governor Parnell recognizes the problem with Medicaid. Dr. Hurlburt will track down how much Medicaid money is spent on Medevacs. Dr. Don Hudson stressed that this could be an educational process.

Motion: To write a letter of support to the Trauma Committee to consider pursuing the Level 5 concept.

Action: Passed.

Alaska Preparedness Program Report (Chris Laborde)

Chris described the 2011 Hospital Preparedness Conference which was held in Anchorage on January 27 and 28. They had a representation of over 70 hospitals and long-term care centers. They discussed Emergency Plans, the Tribal Health System, the Alternative Care Site Planning, and the Oxygen Conservation Planning. The Preparedness Unit will work with each hospital preparedness coordinator on their exercise planning. Roy Sursa said it would be advantageous to know of any training. Chris described the Federal Medical Station. It is a 250 bed mobile facility. They have to find a place where to set it up in the event of an emergency. Chris described the Alaska Shield 2012 Exercise. The initial planning conference will be held next month. Roy Sursa would like EMS to be more involved in this.

EMS Training Coordinator Report (Lee Parham)

A total of 532 courses were approved (Alaska Specific/Basic Instructor, Methods of Instruction, Medivac Escort Instruction course). In August she will receive new course approval applications. During the Training Committee meeting they discussed the new American Heart Association changes and picked 3 people for the Symposium. Sue Hecks and Lee will start doing the planning for Pre-Symposium. She also reported that the average turnaround time for certifications is 6 weeks.

EMS Training Committee Report (Dave Rockney)

Dave reported that they discussed EMS regulations during the EMS Training Committee meeting in January, Scope of Practice, and Expanded Scope. Among other things, they discussed a 4 level EMT system to address the large volume of expanded scope requests. They discussed that language is needed to make it clear that the scope of practice does not cover nor authorize EMTs to work in a clinical setting when doing the job of a medical technician or other licensed healthcare provider. Instructor qualifications were discussed. Dave then presented a summary of the problems and suggested changes they have recommended over the past 10 years.

Oxygen Transport Update (Don Hudson)

Don described the oxygen transport issue, including a bill that would exempt Alaska from oxygen packaging requirements. Patients who need oxygen can carry the amount of oxygen that they need, on a commercial vehicle. The question remains of where to actually put the oxygen bottle in the aircraft.

DOT-PF Highway Safety Office Liaison Report (Cindy Cashen)

Cindy's office administers federal funding for driver behavior programs that encourage safe driving. This year the office will administer 14 to 15 million dollars; unfortunately, they only get to spend about 1.6 million on occupant protection programs. She encourages all members to participate in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). The SHSP has to be updated every five years in order to continue to receive federal funding. Overall fatalities are dropping, but not alcohol-related ones. The top priorities of the office are: impaired driving; seatbelt usage; aggressive driving; red light running; young drivers; safety corridors; and distracted driving. Cindy described the online grant application and that the RFP is open from April 1st to May 1st. They want to see 3½ years of data showing that there is a problem, how you're going to fix it, and how you're going to prove that it was fixed.

Injury Prevention Program Report (Jayne Andreen)

Jayne oversees the Unintentional Injury Program. Jayne described the programs and staff. She is preparing a grant application for a CDC Grant and requested a letter of support from ACEMS.

Motion: [John Dickens/Don Hudson] To write a letter of support for the injury and violence prevention collaboration.

Action: Motion passed unanimously. Roy Sursa offered to write the letter

Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention Program Report (Janice Gray, RN)

The program is funded by the CDC. Janice described the Take Heart Coalition and problems with not having enough data and support of electronic medical records to improve their data. They will be working with Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and Diabetes, Stroke and Heart Disease, Tobacco and Obesity stakeholders to coordinate their efforts. Dr. Don Hudson stated that electronic medical records have brought down productivity, and one of the biggest problems is that data systems do not speak to each other.

Big Wild Heart of Alaska CPR Initiative (Jim Foster)

Jim described the Big Wild Heart of Alaska CPR Initiative. They have gone to schools, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, and came to Juneau and trained Legislative staff and members. They trained 100 people in 3½ days. The main thing to remember is to push hard and push fast until responders arrive.

Regional Directors & Coordinators Report (Sue Hecks, Chair)

They were looking at the FY11 grant reporting format, and the change to a logic model format. Sue described the change in methodology. They have 5 goals instead of 15: training, equipment, communications, community outreach, and data. Sue mentioned that they have implemented their own format which seems to work well and makes grant requests much easier. Sue stated that one of the items that came up in discussion was the need for a Data Manager, not just for the AURORA project but for the AK Comms project. The Data Manager is a key position. Data collection and management is necessary for the state EMS office.

Motion [Danita Koehler/John Dickens] That ACEMS support a Data Manager position for EMS.

Action: Motion passed unanimously

Sue described the need for rewriting the EMS regulations. It's the responsibility of the EMS office, but with their staff shortage when they will be done is unsure. Sue described the EMS communication with the legacy system upgrade beginning in January. Discussion was held about creation of an EMS Board. Committee members are: Dan Johnson- Chair, Sue Hecks, Shelley Owens, Mike Motti, Mary Leemhuis, Bobbi Leichty, Aggie Jack, and possibly Soren Threadgill.

Top 10 Priority list:

1. Supporting State EMS office regarding filling staff vacancies
2. New regulations
3. Certification process
4. Aurora
5. Communications
6. Code Blue
7. EMS Website
8. Recruitment and retention
9. Medical records support
10. Oxygen availability/transport

Motion: [Ron Bowers/Don Hudson] To write a letter to the state EMS office requesting restoration of the system that allowed EMT certifications to be posted on the state website after expiration.

Action: Motion passed unanimously

Kulis Air National Guard

Roy and John raised concern that Kulis is closing their station as of February 12, 2011. Anchorage International Airport in the busiest cargo port, and this leaves no rescue for the south side of Anchorage. Roy Sursa will contact the Lt. Governor's office to find out what the plan is.

ACS Liaison & Trauma Review Committee Report (Frank Sacco, MD)

Frank announced that the Trauma bill has been passed and signed in June. Regulations to distribute money from the fund have not been finalized yet, they are still in the comment stage. When they are finished they will be able to distribute the funds to trauma centers in Alaska. Frank described that they are working on writing the regulations and criteria for level five trauma centers.

The Alaska Trauma Registry:

- There is a new trauma manager and workgroup
- The data is now current thru 2009
- Julie is working on the Trauma System Plan

Wrap Up and Recess (Roy Sursa, ACEMS Vice-Chair)

ALASKA COUNCIL ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
MINUTES - Friday, February 4, 2011

Call to Order:

Call to Order 8:30 am

REGIONAL EMS REPORTS

Interior EMS Region Report (Dave Rockney)

Dave reported that they have completed all Code Blue projects except one. They are currently working on phase 11. Dave described that they are doing a lot of CPR training; the training center is 25%-30% of their program. Dave mentioned that they are going to do a one day course called First Response, there will be an instructor course as well, which will be held at the symposium April 1st and 2nd, the cost will be \$75. Dave stated that Priority One costs millions a year and only has been used 3-4 times in the last few years. Dan explained that so far the MAST unit is not going to be reactivated but they are still trying to get it reactivated. The lack of rescue has severely impacted them. Aurora is going pretty well, they were the first Region to jump on it. They have 26 different certified services now. Fairbanks just got on board.

Southern Region Report (Sue Hecks)

Sue announced that it was their 35th anniversary. Symposium was a great success this year although numbers were down a bit. The State no longer sends out the ambulance survey so send out a survey to the Region. They are not getting the data that they need. With regard to Code Blue, since July 1 they have shipped out five ambulances. Whittier Alaska Marine Lines shipped four for free. The Region has paid for half a million dollars in Code Blue projects up front for which they are waiting to be reimbursed. Cooper Landing had a repeater failure and needed their repeater replaced which has been done. Anchorage is now reporting EMS data in AURORA.

Sue described the mini grants, the Lifelines publication, and the value of volunteers (\$20.82 per hour). Roy stated that Alaska gets a 12% adjustment on top of the national rate. Sue discussed Bristol Bay and the huge budget cuts they have incurred, which has resulted in no training and no travel. Bristol Bay also has lost their trainer and has concerns on how they are going to maintain first responder certifications. The Copper River community has raised \$75,000. for a new ambulance; they also have recruitment and retention issues with 400 miles of road to cover. They have a brand new ALS-capable ambulance and no one to staff it. It is difficult to maintain certification levels so many personnel have had to downgrade to BLS. Currently Copper River has one provider per 100 miles of road for 24/7 365 day coverage; that's four providers for 400 miles of road coverage. Dr. Koehler stated when an ambulance takes a client from the highway to the clinic the service doesn't receive payment for transporting the patient.

Southeast Region Report (Bobbi Leichty)

No representative for this Region

North Slope Borough Report (Dave Potashnick)

Dave described the training that they have been doing. They need to replace the 911 systems/communication system and have brought in a specialist to look into the communications system. They are going to evaluate the ImageTrend product as an alternative to FireHouse. Dave

described mentioned their Explorer Program which reaches out to Boy Scouts, and other club affiliations in regards to bike safety and other safety.

With regard to Code Blue, they have a few items left on phase 7 then they will be closing it out. In Phase 8, they are still working on the track vehicles. A good portion of Phase 9 has been spent and Phase 10 funds were used to buy Barrow a new ambulance.

Northwest Arctic - Maniilaq Association Report (Aggie Jack)

They are no longer using ImageTrend and Guardian has taken over their medevac services. They have trained 78 students: 164 BLS, EMT I, II and III classes. The American Heart Association classes are coming up and an EMT refresher is in March. Michael described their new mini-trucks. They are small enough to fly in, and have tracks for winter and wheels for summer. The USDA approved the used mini-truck chassis. The gas mileage is good; the tracks cost \$5,000 and allow them to go on boardwalks and trails. The cost for the whole truck was about \$23,000. In Code Blue, most of their phases are done. They have just received Phase 10 money and are working on that.

Norton Sound Report (Louis Murphy)

Louis stated that they have almost ironed out all of the problems with AURORA. He provided an update on Code Blue; Phases 7 and 8 have money leftover so they are still working on it. They can't receive Phase 10 until they have spent all of Phase 7 and 8 funding.

Louis described storm damage to Savoonga in which salt spray shorted out the communications. The State had told him that locations need to be prepared to be on their own for a week. The city system failed, the clinic didn't have sufficient power, and the fuel tanks were not large enough to sustain the amount of time of the outage. During the outage there were many brownouts which caused damage to equipment. 17 D-sized tanks were used up for chronic needs, pediatric oxygen needs, and carbon monoxide poisoning. Some villagers took shelter at the school. Communications failed (Global Star) and aircraft could only fly during the day. Every backup system they had in place failed or were insufficient.

Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation (Brian Lefferts)

Brian reported that Phases 9 and 10 phases of Code Blue were open, they only have a few items left. They plan on purchasing an ACLS simulation manikin for the fire department. They purchased two ATV ambulances which cost \$72,000. each. The Injury Prevention component opened a gift shop/ coffee house. The gift shop sells safety products and has 3 part-time employees. They purchased 56 gun safes to go into new housing, and sent out irons for putting reflective tape on kids' clothes. The nurses have four wheelers and snow machines to use but they are getting old. In training, they have done over 450 hours of training classes and instruction.

EMS for Children Report (Mark Johnson)

Mark reported that they are working on a project about school emergency departments for pediatric care. A review will be coming up at the end of February. One of the grant requirements is to have a full time EMS-C staff person. He mentioned that the term full time equivalent could facilitate recruitment.

The EMS office budget and staffing problem is a priority. I would like to see a collective voice to the legislature and to the administration saying that this is an important program and we can't let it fail to do its statutorily-mandated duty because we don't have the staff and the funding for it. Without a

strong state office, the system can't function like it's supposed to. All the components have to be strong, but the chain is only as strong as the weakest link. If we allow one piece of it to fail, it could lead to the ultimate demise of this program. I feel fairly strongly and I'm willing to advocate on your behalf but don't necessarily want to do it completely by myself. I hope everybody understands that there is a statutorily-mandated role to this program and the state office is central to it. It was funded in the past so what happened? It's a shell game trying to figure out where all the dollars went, but I think that what the legislature sees is a well-funded program, what the legislature sees is a program that can fill its positions, so there's a miscommunication going on and something has to change.

Roy Sursa: That opinion is echoed by everybody sitting around this table. Mark: The positions were created and the Governor's budget looks like they're in there. So there's a disconnect going there.

Roy: I don't know if the funds are being redirected to another source or what. Mark: they do the budget then they do an internal management plan. I managed for a long long time and know how to balance the budget and manage it. I believe that somebody is not managing this budget. I don't have the time to trace every dollar and figure out where it's all going, but I do believe it is being mismanaged, and the result of it is your program is suffering.

Governor of Alaska (Mike Lesmann, Special Assistant)

Mike Lesmann thanked everyone on behalf of Governor Parnell for their commitment, their leadership and their personal sacrifices when working long hours. Dr. Don Hudson stressed that the EMS office needs more professional support. A discussion about recruitment and retention and financial support of EMS personnel followed. Don: the State should not have to rely on volunteers. Dr. Koehler: we can reduce costs to the State and add jobs to rural Alaska. John Dickens: the EMS office needs to be adequately funded. Roy Sursa: domestic violence and child abuse needs to be addressed. People contact EMS first. Support for the EMS office is needed. The EMTs needed more support or else they might lose them because they cannot deal with child abuse or alcoholic situations anymore. Sue Hecks described how the EMS system works: responders and instructors all need to work together. Ron Bowers: everything rises and falls with leadership and that the leadership comes from the Juneau office right now, which is underequipped. He suggested concentrating more on the day to day events rather than disaster preparedness for a big emergency. Mike Lesmann agreed that the social problems are more complex than before.

EMS Program Report (Shelley Owens)

In November 2009, IPEMS was reorganized into the Section of Emergency Programs: Preparedness, EMS, and Trauma. Preparedness and Trauma are housed in Anchorage. Since then, we have had a turnover of all but 2 staff members: Lee Parham – State Training Coordinator, and Raj Maskay – the EMS-C Program Manager. Some positions, like the Section Chief, have turned over twice. When the Section was reorganized, it had a \$1.3 million dollar deficit and 3 positions have been held open to save money. The good news is that in November we hired Quinn Sharkey as the EMT Certification Specialist. Quinn is a Nurse/EMT and a volunteer with Juneau Mt. Rescue. He was a Paramedic in Texas and managed a clinic in Sitka before moving to Juneau. This morning I submitted a request for approval to hire a Certification Asst. to help Quinn out. Quinn inherited a large backload of work and is currently processing 2,500 applications a year.

Our main priorities in the EMS office are:

- Going paperless: implementing a web-based EMT and ambulance certification system. It will save considerable time for staff and applicants. The change will allow applicants to track the progress of their applications on line, and allow Instructors and the EMS Regions to get feedback

on the test scores of their classes. We're seeking funding for these initiatives and evaluating third party vendor software or building the system in house.

- **Revitalizing AURORA.** The Data Manager position in the EMS office has been vacant since I left in February 2009. Wilma Vinton of Interior Region EMS, Jane Schultz from the Kenai Subarea of Southern Region EMS, and Anjela Johnston from Southeast Region EMS have kept the program alive. I can't express my gratitude sufficiently for the support and expertise of the three women and the Regions.
- **Purchase of the Fire Bridge.** Wednesday Deputy Director Kerre Fisher gave me the okay to purchase the Fire Bridge module from ImageTrend. This will allow fire services to do single data entry for fire and EMS data into the AURORA system. ImageTrend has agreed to give us additional features free of charge, including the ability to capture data for inventory; inspections; hydrant locations; scheduling; and activities.
- **Regulations.** I plan on making headway with the EMS regulations rewrite this year, but the speed of the project will depend on whether I can fill staff positions. At its meeting last week, the Training Committee worked on regulations pertaining to training and scope of practice. I have other advisory groups lined up and a plan for soliciting input around the state through the I-Link system, which is like Go-To Meeting.

Legislation

211 bills were introduced in the first month of the Legislative Session. We're watching the cell phone bills and the bill to change seatbelt enforcement back to secondary enforcement. The residential sprinkler bill is back again this year. There were some positive changes made to the version last year and if you have any thoughts about it, let me know. SB 4 would create a Volunteer Appreciation Day. Chief Bob Painter from Homer wrote an excellent letter to his management about the economic value of the volunteer. We have 4,500 certified EMTs in the State and estimate that 80% of our EMS response is by volunteers. This will give us a good opportunity to showcase the role of the volunteer in the state EMS and Fire.

State EMS medical Director's Report (Ken Zafren, MD)

Dr. Zafren gave a report on State EMS activities, including the Prehospital Data System, EMS for Children, Medical Director training, the trauma system, expanded scope of practice, the 2010 EMS Symposium, pandemic flu preparations, and revision of the Cold Injury Guidelines. Ken will send out an email around as soon as the CDs and DVDs about EMS for children are available for EMTs.

Responder Ready Campaign (Robert Tanner)

Robert Tanner, the Outreach Coordinator for DMVA gave a presentation about the Responder Ready campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to make the public more aware of an emergency event. They especially try to reach people who have a responsibility for response since a study showed that 2/3rds of the workforce would not respond because they would be caring for their own families. Robert explained that the public expects that firefighters, police officers etc. stay on their job. He encourages all citizens to take on personal responsibility by using a family emergency plan.

Pediatric Liaison Report (BJ Coopes, MD)

Dr. Coopes reported that she has been contacted by health care providers about whether hospital personnel are obligated reporters of child abuse under state statutes. Part of the EMS-C grant requires 6 hours of training for hospital providers. BJ asked everyone to evaluate the new material.

Membership Status:

The appointments of Ron Bowers, John Dickens and Dave Hull expire in November. They would all like to be reappointed. Roy Sursa, Soren Threadgill, and Dr. Don Hudson have received their letters of reappointment.

Appointment to Committees

Ron Bowers would like to step down from the Bylaws committee. Roy Sursa, Soren Threadgill and Dr. Danita Koehler will serve on the committee.

Review of Action Items

1. **Motion:** [Roy Sursa/Don Hudson] To approve the meeting minutes from October 7, 2010 with correction of reference to Alaska Fire Service Council to Alaska Fire Standards Council.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
2. **Motion:** [John Dickens/Ron Bowers] To approve the agenda.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
3. **Motion:** [John Dickens/Don Hudson] To create an ACEMS subcommittee on communications which includes representation from the EMS Regional Councils.
Action: Motion passed unanimously
4. **Motion:** [Mary Leemhuis/John Dickens] To write a letter of support to the Trauma Committee to consider pursuing the Level 5 concept.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
5. **Motion:** [Ron Bowers/John Dickens] To write a letter to the Governor and to the Commissioner to ensure and restore full resources to the State EMS office to achieve the goals and regulations.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
6. **Motion:** [John Dickens/Ron Bowers] To adjourn the meeting.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.

Dates for next meeting:

Next teleconference about Action Items: 3/09/2011 at 1:30 PM.

Next meetings: October 6-7, 2011; February 2-3, 2012; and October 4-5 2012.

Adjourned: **5:00** pm