

Vermont EMS Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 22, 2012 – 9:30 a.m.

Attendees:

Randy Terk, EMS District 12	John Vose, VAA
William Hathaway, VSFA	Mark Considine, EMS District 8, 9, 11 & 13
Jim Finger, EMS District 10	Harry Chen, VDH Commissioner
Debra Bach, Nurse Manager	Mike Leyden, VDH EMS
Mike Paradis, EMS District 2/5	Ray Walker, VDH EMS
Tracy Dolan, VDH	Ben O'Brien, PFFV
Patrick Malone, IREMS	Matt Vinci, PFFV
Kate Soons, EMS District 3	

Meeting called to order at 0932 hours. After introductions, Commissioner Harry Chen thanked the committee for convening and reviewed the outcomes from Act 155 passed by the 2012 Legislature:

- Changed EMS certifications to EMS licenses
- Addressed credentialing requirements for EMS agencies
- Created support for on-line EMS continuing education
- Initiated an analysis of EMS response times
- Created the EMS Advisory Committee (EMSAC)
- Created a special fund for EMS training and data collection
- Tasked VDH with developing response times standards for urban, rural, volunteer and career EMS agencies

The EMSAC is to report to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2014 that includes:

- Response times by district for the previous year
- Recommendations on the following:
 - Consolidation of EMS districts, perhaps along Public Safety District lines
 - A requirement for towns to develop EMS plans
 - Ensuring 911 coverage when taking a non-emergency transfer call

The EMSAC may also consider issues not specifically addressed in Act 155. The output will be recommendations, not proposed legislation. The committee will develop a work plan which will determine how much time each issue will need. In addition to agreeing whether to pursue these topics, the committee must provide guidance on how to achieve them.

Consolidation of Districts

Several members of the committee were curious about what prompted this part of the legislation and where this question was leading. Have there been concerns raised about the current system?

Matt Vinci suggested that it might be a good idea to step back and take a look at a system that hasn't changed in 20 years. Pat Malone seconded the thought, saying it was worth

looking to see where things could be improved. Commissioner Chen expressed support for the goals of Act 155 and stated that it raises reasonable questions.

Town EMS Plans

The committee expressed unanimous support for the idea. Too many towns are not aware of local EMS operations and only pay attention when a problem arises. Having a town EMS plan will at least make them more cognizant of EMS in their area.

The first goal of the committee is to define what an EMS response plan is. It appears that Vermont does not require towns to provide EMS but leaves it to EMS districts to coordinate EMS responses.

It would be useful to see EMS response plans from other states and use them as models. Randy Terk suggested building the EMS plan into towns' existing emergency plans.

Would requiring a town to have an EMS plan affect the tax base?

A template or questionnaire would be helpful for towns when creating their EMS plan. Committee members were asked to email proposed items for this before the next meeting. The committee should be prepared to help towns create their plans.

Should towns plan separately for routine EMS operations and for disaster or surge situations? Towns and districts already have disaster response plans – be sure not to overlap.

Several towns have contracts with EMS agencies, but many do not.

The representative of Vermont League of Cities and Towns was not present and would be a valuable asset to the discussion.

Response Times

Chris Bell reported that these data can be gathered from SIREN. The legislative report will be due 12 months after SIREN is scheduled to be fully implemented, and there will be good data available by then.

Commissioner Chen opened the discussion by asking the committee to think about what response time standards would look like. Chris Bell suggested a 4-box matrix describing Urban/Career, Rural/Career, Urban/Volunteer and Rural/Volunteer. We can look at other states and organizations such as the fire service to see what standards already exist.

Mark Considine inquired about tapping into the Spillman database which captures dispatch information from around the state. This would ensure uniformity to response time reporting. Public Safety has been reluctant to make Spillman data accessible. Also, the time stamp is dependent on when the dispatcher enters the data, and not all dispatch information is included.

Ensuring 911 Coverage when Taking Non-Emergency Transports

This issue arose from a situation in District 2 where one ambulance service was constantly relying on Newport Ambulance to cover their service area so they could take non-emergency transport calls.

The principal questions:

- Is the mutual aid system adequate to cover emergency calls when an area's primary ambulance takes a non-emergency call?
- Are agencies routinely relying on mutual aid when taking non-emergency calls?
- Is the mutual aid system being abused?

Smaller agencies rely on non-emergency transports for revenue.

How widespread is this problem? Should the committee even wade in? The committee agreed that agencies should be surveyed: "How often have you asked for mutual aid and not gotten a positive response? Is this a problem for your agency? Is this a problem for other agencies in your area?"

Hospitals also figure into the equation and should be part of the discussion. Delays in transports can affect bed availability.

A concern about uniform mandates was raised: some agencies' capabilities vary year to year. Commissioner Chen responded that mandates can be instituted for preventing abuse.

Do districts have the authority to act? Districts don't want the authority; they want to seek solutions and then ask the state to step in as needed.

Document Sharing

Any documents that need to be shared among the committee members will be available on the Vermont Health Alert Network (HAN). Committee members should make sure their HAN accounts are active.

EMS Special Fund

The special fund is funded the same mechanism from insurance companies that supports the Fire Service Training Council. It will be used to assist with providing on-line continuing education and augmenting regional/district training opportunities.

On-line training opportunities

A third-party vendor will be selected through an RFP process to provide an internet-based learning management system (LMS). Users can log into the website to take continuing education courses and track progress in the required subject areas. There will be a test component to each offering. Vermont continuing education does not need to be presented by a licensed Instructor/Coordinator; testing is not required, nor is it prohibited.

There will be no cost to users.

The range of bids is \$20,000 to \$625,000; the expected cost will be around \$60,000.

It is expected that the selected LMS will include pre-loaded content, but the system will allow for both live (synchronous) and recorded (asynchronous) offerings. Districts will be encouraged to provide content.

Regional/District training opportunities

Districts will be given funding for continuing and initial education. The money is intended to increase the number of training opportunities and not simply subsidize the existing level of training.

The committee agreed to create eligibility criteria and develop a flat-rate “menu” where the level of funding depends on the type of training offered. For instance, a district would receive a certain amount per student for an initial course, a different amount for a refresher course, and so on. There could be consideration of additional funding based on the district’s population.

Districts would contract with the EMS office and provide a brief report verifying that the funding was spent for the desired purpose. A district would have the freedom to use the funds where it sees fit (instructor pay, scholarships, new equipment, etc.) as long as the money was spent for increasing educational opportunities, adding providers and improving proficiency.

The committee considered surveying districts to determine as a baseline the amount of training currently offered in a year and then setting a goal for additional training options. The emphasis could be on bridging the gap between the current CE requirement (which varies by license level) and the future requirement of 72 hours every 2 years.

Licensure testing has become more complex since the state adopted the National Registry of EMTs psychomotor (practical) evaluation system in January. A proposal was made to use some of the special fund money to finance a testing team instead of relying on the educational program to provide their own evaluators. If special fund money is not available for testing, then there should be a separate discussion about the current testing process and addressing the issues that have arisen.

General EMS Updates

Transition Courses: the EMS office expects to have the instruction materials rolled out in September

Protocol revisions: a work committee will be convened soon after the transition programs are launched

Credentialing: agencies will be given a variance allowing them to be relicensed without a credentialing program this year. Agencies that have credentialing programs are encouraged to share them with the EMS office. Some have already submitted their plans.

Vermont EWS Advisory Committee Meeting
August 22, 2012

Agency relicensing: new renewal applications will be used this year that reflect new reporting requirements in the EMS Rules. The goal is to offer a fillable PDF document, pre-populated information from previous license applications and eventually use SIREN to collect some of the information now gathered on the license renewal applications.

EMS Conference: the planning committee received 245 speaker proposals to fill 90 slots. The goal is to have the schedule finalized and posted by the first week in September. The website is active, and registrations can begin as soon as the schedule is posted.

SIREN: 70% of licensed ambulance services are actively reporting into SIREN. The data dictionary is nearly finalized. Meetings are underway with internal Health Department and external stakeholders to learn what data are desired from SIREN. Later, service leaders will be surveyed about data they would like to see.

Laptops: all ambulance services will receive a free used or new Toughbook computer in the next 4 to 6 months. As more used laptops are made available from the state police, other agencies could receive additional laptops (ambulance services with more than one truck, first response agencies). EMS Data Manager Jenna Protzko is available to provide SIREN training, and training sessions will be offered at the EMS Conference.

EMS for Children: the program is in the process of renewing its grant. A focus for the next year will be to work with emergency departments to improve readiness for pediatric emergencies.

EMS training coordinator: the EMS office received a good number of applications from qualified individuals. Interviews will begin in the next couple of weeks and the estimated start date for the successful candidate is in about two months.

EMS rule revisions: work will begin on updating the EMS Rules next year after receiving input and output from the EMSAC regarding the work items discussed in this meeting.

Next meeting date is December 5th, 2012 0930-1200

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ray Walker

