

Western Virginia EMS Council, Inc.

MEMORANDUM

**TO: EMS System Leaders
Western Virginia EMS Region**

FROM: Ford Wirt, President

RE: Ambulance Resupply and Drug Box Restocking

DATE: July 20, 1998

The process by which hospitals in Virginia and elsewhere have been resupplying ambulances with EMS supplies and restocking ALS drug boxes has been seriously challenged by recent decisions from Federal government agencies. At least three of the decisions indicate that in certain circumstances, drug box restocking and ambulance resupply can be violations of federal laws and/or regulations. This is a nationwide situation that affects hospitals and EMS systems -- career and volunteer -- across the country.

EMS systems and the hospitals that work with them have been grappling with the problem. Most hospital and EMS leaders believe the exchange process that has served us so well for 20-plus years must be changed, especially to eliminate the possibility of federal prosecution. At the same time, these leaders in Virginia are working to maintain a fair and equitable exchange process that will serve the best interests of out-of-hospital patient care. A number of proposals are in the works, but at this time, no state, EMS system or agency has identified a process to solve this very complex nationwide problem.

In Virginia, a statewide task force is working toward a solution. We are represented on that group. This task is guided by the following facts:

- ◆ A solution in the form of a new exchange process must be developed promptly. Hospitals have indicated a deadline of July 1, 1999.
- ◆ Any solution must be uniform and standardized to the point of meeting state and federal laws and regulations, while being flexible enough to accommodate regional diversity.
- ◆ Hospitals are committed to a solution that includes the long-term survival of Virginia's EMS System, including solid support for an effective exchange program.

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- ◆ Any solution will likely include some type of mechanism for reimbursing hospitals for drug box restocking and ambulance resupply costs, while ensuring that out-of-hospital agencies remain financially viable.

The statewide Task Force includes major hospital systems and community hospitals (all represented by the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association), the Virginia EMS Advisory Board, the Virginia Office of EMS, the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads, the State Fire Chiefs' Association and the Virginia Regional EMS Councils.

The statewide Task Force met on June 26 and discussed the exchange problems and a wide range of possible solutions. When referring to drug box restocking, the exchange includes medications and related pharmaceuticals including IV fluids, administration sets and needles. Ambulance resupply includes items such as oxygen administration devices, airway items, defibrillator pads, cervical collars, dressings, nebulizers, etc.

If the eventual solution includes costs for supplies that must be passed along to EMS agencies, it would be coupled with some type of cost recovery mechanism that would be offered to those agencies. Participation in such a system would be totally voluntary. The decision to participate in cost recovery would be left to the discretion of the agencies and local governments.

Our region has been identified and asked to develop a pilot process for our Western Virginia EMS region. Our process will be shared with other regions, and could become a statewide model. I have appointed a region-wide task force to study the options and to make recommendations. At the same time, members of the statewide Task Force will continue to confer and work to finalize a process that can then be reviewed by all components of the Virginia EMS system. In the meantime, the VHHA has encouraged hospitals across the state to continue ambulance resupply and drug box restocking pending the development of a workable, standardized process.

Please understand that no final decisions on an ultimate solution or process have been made. The regional and statewide Task Forces will continue to meet and will welcome any proposals.

This memo is being mailed to all segments of the Western Virginia EMS system including hospital administrators, volunteer and career EMS agencies, physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other interested persons. We want provide accurate information and quell speculation and rumors. The Task Forces will do everything possible to keep all components fully informed of any developments or changes as it continues its work.

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Please feel free to contact representatives of the agencies represented in either the regional or statewide Task Force for more information, or to share your ideas. The statewide task force consists of major hospital systems and community hospitals, the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, the Virginia EMS Advisory Board, the Virginia Office of EMS, the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads, the State Fire Chiefs' Association and the Virginia Regional EMS Councils. They will try to address your concerns, answer your questions and they will welcome your suggestions.

Listed below are the initial members of the Western Virginia EMS Region's Task Force. Please feel free to contact them with questions or suggestions, and let Rob Logan at the EMS Council's Roanoke office know if you would like to participate in this Task Force's work.

- ◆ Betsy Aderholdt, Chair, Carilion Health System Administration
- ◆ Allen Vierling, Carilion Hospitals
- ◆ Jim Sholes, Columbia Hospitals Administration
- ◆ Joe Ciezkowski, Danville Regional Medical Center Administration
- ◆ Carol Stevens, Patrick County Memorial Hospital Administration
- ◆ Barbara Jackman, Memorial Hospital of Martinsville & Henry County Administration
- ◆ Claude Webster, WVEMS Board, Franklin County Administration
- ◆ David Smith, WVEMS Board, REMSI, Pulaski County
- ◆ David Hoback, WVEMS Board, Roanoke City Fire and EMS Administration
- ◆ Mike Lewis, Career Governmental Provider, Roanoke County Fire and Rescue
- ◆ Bob Lloyd, WVEMS Board, Radford City Administration
- ◆ Benny Summerlin, Henry County Administration
- ◆ Herbert House, WVEMS Board, City of Danville
- ◆ Wanda Morehead, Vice Pres., VAVRS
- ◆ Rob Logan, WVEMS Staff

Although no decisions have been made nor solutions reached at this point, our goal is to end up with a system that will be better for all parts of our EMS system. The rest of Virginia will be looking to us to see what we develop, and we see this as a positive opportunity to improve our EMS delivery system. As recommendations and plans are developed, our Task Force will schedule meetings with all of you to share information. Thank you for your interest and participation as we address this very important issue.