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Finding a Port in the Storm

DES suspends all system hospital diversion requests

In early January local emergency departments experienced unusually high patient volume, causing at one point only two hospitals reporting as open to ambulance traffic. This condition resulted in extended run times for EMS agencies and unusually high incidents of EMS mutual aid requests. Ambulances were traveling far outside of their normal operational areas to locate an ER still open to EMS traffic.

With the threat of severe winter weather that would undoubtedly result in hazardous road conditions and extended travel times, on January 6th the Westchester County Department of Emergency Services (DES) directed regional EMS agencies to disregard posted diversions and to utilize normal primary destination ERs.

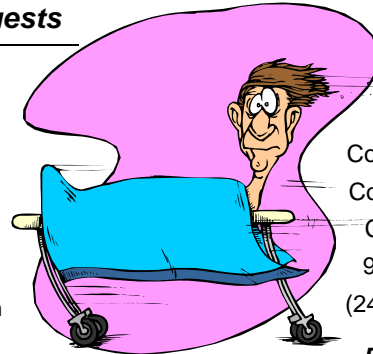
New Interim Policies Developed

Two days later, the Department of Emergency Services (DES) and the Regional EMS Council (REMSCO) called representatives of the 911 receiving facilities in the Region to an emergency meeting. All recognized a need for greater coordination of the diversion process to ensure that the impact to the Regional EMS system is not being overlooked. While a number of long-term solutions were discussed, it

was decided that the following actions in the short term would be taken:

Diversion requests will be made to the ECC – A hospital requesting

diversion must call the OEM Watch Desk at the Westchester County Emergency Communication Center (ECC) – 914-231-1819 (24hr).



Diversions will only be granted for a maximum of 4 hours

– Hospitals needing additional time must recontact the ECC with another request.

Diversions may be refused based on system status

– If the following conditions exist, a request will be considered "pending" until a DES Administrator on call makes a decision:

- A contiguous hospital is already on diversion
- This will make the fourth hospital on diversion system-wide
- The Westchester Medical Center is on diversion

The REMSCO will continue to work with DES and the regional hospitals to establish a final policy statement. Modifications to the Hospital Diversion website are being made, including an online report form that will be required for any requests, automation of system status "triggers", and updates to the EMS notification system (i.e. addition of faxed reports of status changes).

Please contact DES EMS / Communications Chief Michael Volk at the EMS Office at (914) 231-1616 with any questions.



A Failure to Communicate

Some EMS Providers are not making pre-arrival notifications

It was reported at the last REMAC meeting that during the recent hospital

diversion crisis a disturbing trend was noticed – EMTs were not contacting the ER prior to arrival. Physicians related encounters with EMS crews who expressed an opinion that they were not required to communicate with the hospital unless requesting orders. These providers are greatly mistaken. The requirement for pre-arrival hospital notification by EMS is found in state policy, as well as state and regional protocol.



contact the Medical Control facility upon completion of standing orders and is required to make contact within 20 minutes of being on a scene. Failure to do so is subject to notification of the Chief Operations Officer who shall make a report periodically to the agency's Medical Director of such incidences.

The Westchester REMAC would like all Regional EMS agencies to stress with their providers that pre-arrival communication with a 911 receiving facility is **REQUIRED**, not optional.

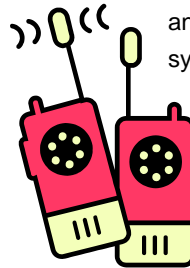


Can you hear me now?

The new Countywide trunked radio system infrastructure to be completed later this year.

Over the past four years, Westchester County has been working on building an analog, trunked, two-way radio system using UHF frequencies licensed to the county for dispatch. The purposes of this system is to enhance communications for both EMS and Fire agencies by providing voice communications between:

- The Emergency Communications Center (60 Control) and emergency vehicles being dispatched to events
- Units dispatched to a mutual aid request as well as to coordinate resources and share critical information prior to arriving at the scene



NYSDOH Policy 98-02: Radio Communication Systems for EMS
Among other reasons listed, NYSDOH Policy 98-02 directs all certified EMS agencies to possess radio communications resources that are capable of providing:

"Within a reasonable distance and at least 10 minutes prior to arrival, contact a destination Hospital ED to provide patient status and time of arrival information."

NYSDOH BLS Protocols
According to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Statewide BLS Adult and Pediatric Treatment Protocols for EMT-B and AEMT providers, the following information is to be relayed to the hospital while enroute to the ER:

- Ambulance service ID
- Estimated time of arrival (ETA)
- Patient information (including chief complaint and subjective/objective assessment findings)
- Any delays in transport or other unusual occurrences.

Paramedic Protocols
According to the Westchester Regional Paramedic Protocols, a paramedic must

Spread the Word....

Help Is Here

The New York State Museum in Albany opened 2005 an exhibit dedicated to EMS this past fall entitled "Help Is Here". This exhibition traces the history of emergency medical services in New York, both transport and treatment. The exhibit will be run from November 20, 2004 through September 11, 2005. For more information go to: www.nysm.nysed.gov

Annual Regional EMS Awards

The Public Information and Education Committee (PIE) of the Regional EMS Council (REMSCO) has announced that it will be releasing the applications for this year's annual awards by March 1st. The Committee would like to encourage everyone to begin thinking of candidates for this year's awards. For a description of award categories and eligibility requirements, please contact the Regional EMS Office.

Talk groups have been developed following the current Battalion structure being used for the Fire Services. In the next couple of months, Battalion Coordinators will be contacting EMS agencies to attend local informational meetings to provide important project updates regarding topics such as agreements, installations, and frequency setup.

Bulletins providing information on the new radio system are available on the DES Website, www.westchestergov.com/emergserv



ABCs of WMD & PPE
Regional EMS agencies are slow to take advantage of free local training

Numerous attempts have been made over the past year to provide training opportunities to the EMS providers and agencies in the county. These in-services include WMD Training, Respiratory Protection Program development and the use of the Port-a-count units available for loan to fit test personnel. While these classes are attended by large numbers of fire and police personnel, to date the EMS community has mostly ignored these efforts.

Respiratory protection equipment provided by NYS for EMS is in the process of being released by DES to the municipalities via inter-municipal agreements (IMAs). The municipalities are being advised that it is recommended that EMS personnel and agencies should complete specific training before these kits are implemented:

- WMD Awareness



- Port-a-count training / Respiratory Protection Plan Development
 - WMD Respiratory PPE Training
- Both the DES Training Center and the Regional Resource Center (RRC), out of the Westchester Medical Center, have WMD awareness and personal protective equipment (PPE) training programs available that can be brought to localities for free. Contact Nitin Natarajan at the RCC, 914-493-1308, for a list of classes and scheduling.

EMS Agencies having questions regarding distribution of the equipment should speak with Kevin Ryan, DES Office of Emergency Management (OEM), 914-231-1696.



Following the “Last” Protocol

ME’s Office asks REMAC to remind agencies of Pronouncement Policy



Senior Medical Examiner Investigator Michael Messenger has asked the REMAC to have regional agencies and Medical Directors

reinforce to EMTs and paramedics the parameters by which EMS may pronounce death at a scene.

All EMS providers should be following **REMCA Policy 01-01: Pronouncement of Death**. Without signs of obvious death, patients found pulseless and apnic are to be treated in accordance with NYSDOH and Westchester REMAC Protocols for Cardiac Arrest.

Westchester Regional Emergency Medical Services Council

2004 - 2005

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Communications

Next Meetings

REMCA
February 28th, 9:00 AM
DES Training Center

REMSCO
March 24th, 6:00 PM
DES Training Center

Coming up...

February 23rd, 11 AM – 5 PM
DES Training Center
CEVO II - AMBULANCE

Coaching the Emergency Vehicle Operator (CEVO). CEVO II qualifies as completion of the required driver training as set forth in NYS EMS Policy Statement # 00-13, The Operation of Emergency Medical Services Vehicles.

Registration is available on line at www.westchestergov.com/emergserv/ems/emsregform.htm.

Or by contacting Jeff Reilly, Regional Training Coordinator at 914-231-1495.

EMS Providers and/ or agencies with questions regarding this policy, or **Paramedic Protocol 15: Termination of Resuscitation**, please contact the Regional EMS Office. Copies of all Regional policies and protocols can be found on the REMSCO website, www.wremSCO.org, on the REMAC subpage.



Getting Digits

DOH wants SS#s on PCR's

The Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS) hospital data set can be matched to PCR's using an identifier generated from data using: the first 2 characters of the first name; the first two and last two characters of the last name, the last 4 digits of the

SS#; sex; date of birth. Data left off the PCR's, however, prohibits matching records and undermines prehospital research efforts. It has been noted by the DOH that providers are not collecting social security numbers (SS#) on the PCR's. A widely given reason for not collecting this data point – other than patient incapacity – is worry over identity theft. Per state law and federal HIPAA code, agencies should be maintaining patient confidentiality and properly securing all completed PCR's. If a service is observing these required practices, then chance of inappropriate use of patient information will be prevented. Input of "0"s should be a method of last resort only.

For more information on SPARCS, visit: www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/sparcs/sparcs.htm.

Westchester Regional EMS Council

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

BULK RATE
US POSTAGE
PAID
CITY, STATE
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Name
Street Address
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**REMAC Works In Progress.....Protocol review /update....Credentialing
Policy updates....Quality Improvement (QI) Reviews.....**

