

Southwest Virginia EMS Council, Inc. *Star of Life* Newsletter



1000 West Main Street, Abingdon, VA, 24210

Volume 2, Edition I

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Emergency Physician Receives Governor's EMS Award



Dr. Peter Bruzzo receives his 2007 Governor's EMS Award.

One of our regions's emergency physicians has been recognized for his outstanding contribution to the state's emergency medical services system. Dr. Peter Bruzzo, Marion, VA, received the Governor's Award to the Outstanding Emergency Medical Services Physician at an awards ceremony held in Norfolk, VA, on November 10. Dr. Bruzzo was nominated for the award by the Southwest Virginia EMS Council after receiving their regional award in that category in May of this year. Nine emergency physicians from across Virginia were nominated for the state award.

Dr. Bruzzo was commended for his years of passionate work as an emergency physician and operational medical director in the Virginia EMS system. His active participation with Marion Lifesaving Crew shows his dedication to both the patient and the provider.

"With everything Dr. Bruzzo does, whether he is establishing a quality assurance program to ensure quality pre-hospital care, responding to a high priority call, taking a course to better his abilities, or teaching a course to help improve the skills of those around him," said OEMS Assistant Director Scott Winston, "he does it with contagious enthusiasm."

Continued on page 2

Hospital Donates Office and Training Facility to Sister Council

One of the state's eleven regional emergency medical services councils is enjoying a new home and is positioned to strengthen prehospital education in the region thanks to a donation by the area's largest hospital and longstanding partner. The Rappahannock Emergency Medical Services Council recently opened an 8000 square foot facility featuring a state-of-the-art Regional Training and Simulation Center. The facility was donated to REMS for the next 15 years at \$1 per year by MediCorp, the region's largest hospital.

The facility features office space, two classrooms, and three simulation labs with life-size, computer-operated manikins. The simulation labs will allow EMS providers and hospital workers to maintain the highest possible skill level by providing real-life scenarios and hands-on practice in patient assessment and treatment. The state-of-the-art manikins can be programmed to present with a variety of signs and symptoms and provide realistic patient contacts.

The facility is the first of its kind in the region and is more than twice the size of the council's former training center and required a four-month, \$265,000 renovation to repurpose the building. The simulation labs themselves are constructed to simulate the real-world environment in which students will be assessing and treating patients. One lab features a full-size ambulance box donated by Spotsylvania Volunteer Rescue Squad that required contractors to breach a wall to place it inside.

"Students can experience what it's like to take care of patients in confined quarters," said Linda Harris, regional systems

Continued on page 3

EMS Physician Receives Award (continued from Page 1)

Dr. Bruzzo strives to improve and advance emergency medicine and advocates community service. He actively serves on the State Medical Direction Committee, has helped establish medical protocols for tactical operations and serves as a medic with the Smyth County Sheriffs Office, currently serves as an emergency department physician at Twin County Regional Hospital in Galax, VA, and is the operational medical director for the Marion Lifesaving Crew.

“Dr. Bruzzo is one of our region’s most active and involved operational medical directors,” Council Director Greg Woods stated. “His work to improve the delivery of emergency medical care in our region is exceptional, and I am glad that he is being recognized for his many contributions to strengthen the regional and state EMS system.”

Since 1986, the Governor’s EMS Awards has been an annual program to recognize and honor some of the best EMS providers, administrators, instructors, agencies and organizations in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The awards were presented at the Governor’s EMS Awards Banquet during the Virginia Department of Health Office of EMS 28th Annual EMS Symposium in Norfolk. More than 1,900 EMS providers attended this year’s symposium. State awards are selected by a committee of EMS professionals-including prior year awards recipients- from across the state and are chosen from nominations submitted by the state’s eleven regional EMS councils.

Gary Critzer of Waynesboro received the Governor’s Award for Excellence in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), the highest award issued by the Commonwealth to EMS personnel. He was selected for more than 30 years of dedication to the improvement of EMS in Virginia through his service as a paramedic, his roles in improving EMS communications regionally, strengthening the Central Shenandoah EMS Council while serving as president, enhancing educational opportunities for both instructors and providers and sharing his experiences and opinions on numerous boards and committees, including the Governor’s EMS Advisory Board and subcommittees.

Other 2007 awards winners were: Outstanding Pre-hospital Provider – Eric Lasky, Fredericksburg, VA; Outstanding Pre-hospital Instructor – Colonel Robert Ditch, Yorktown, VA; Nurse with Outstanding Contributions to EMS – Linda Baker, R.N., Virginia Beach, VA; Outstanding EMS Administrator – Battalion Chief Thomas Schwalenberg, Yorktown, VA; Outstanding EMS Agency – Chancellor Volunteer Fire and Rescue, Spotsylvania, VA; Outstanding Contribution to EMS – Norfolk Fire Explorer Post 116, Norfolk, VA; Outstanding Contribution to EMS for Children – Doris Foster, Portsmouth, VA; Outstanding Contribution to EMS Telecommunications – Ta-Tanisha Farmer, Danville, VA; and Outstanding Contribution to EMS by a High School Senior – Bryant Gray, St. Stephens Church, VA.

Council Sets 2008 Regional Awards Program Nomination Deadline

The Southwest Virginia EMS Council EMS Awards Program will begin accepting nominations for this year’s awards program beginning January 1, 2008. The deadline for nominations is March 31, 2008. Winners will be announced at an awards banquet to be held in June 2008.

Awards will be presented in 11 categories: Excellence in EMS, Outstanding Pre-Hospital Providers, Outstanding EMS physician, Outstanding EMS Pre-Hospital Educator, Nurse with Outstanding Contribution to EMS, Outstanding EMS Administrator, Outstanding EMS Agency, Outstanding Contribution to EMS, Outstanding Contribution to EMS for Children, Outstanding EMS Telecommunications Officer/Dispatcher, Scholarship for Outstanding Contribution to EMS by a High School Senior. Nominated forms are available on the Council’s website.

Regional winners will be nominated for the Governor’s EMS Awards. Winners of the state awards will be announced at an awards banquet held at the Virginia Department of Health Office of EMS 29th Annual EMS Symposium in Norfolk in November 2008. For more information on this program, please contact Kathy White at the Council office or via email at kwhite@vaems.org. Be sure to nominate the outstanding EMS providers in your community.

Hospital Donates Office Space (continued from Page 1)



The Simulation Lab rooms are designed to simulate real hospital rooms to enhance the educational experience.

coordinator for the council.

Another lab is set up to resemble a trauma room at Mary Washington Hospital.

“Everything will give the same feel of being in the emergency department,” said Natalie Root, clinical nurse specialist at the hospital.

Another lab is modeled after a labor-and-delivery room at the hospital. Called the OB Station, it features a manikin named Rosemary and her baby. MediCorp sponsored two of the Council’s simulation labs by providing a SimBaby™ manikin for the OB lab and a SimMan™ manikin for the Trauma lab. MediCorp also provided beds and other equipment to set up the rooms to simulate a hospital environment.

More than 600 people will be trained in basic and intermediate EMS classes each year. While EMS will be using the labs, the

hospital will also be sending nurses and others over for use of the simulation center and their skills drills.

“It’s going to be used,” Council Director Christina Skinner said. “That’s what we want.”

This is the second region to open such a facility. The Tidewater EMS Council opened the Kent J. Weber Emergency Response Training and Simulation Center in 2006. Advanced resuscitation equipment, medications, medical gases, overhead lighting, a variety of realistic background scenes and computer imaging display capabilities are some of the elements incorporated into the design of the Center. An audiovisual system incorporates professional recording and editing capabilities to create educational materials for remote and off-line learning. The Center was made possible with funding provided by the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Medical Response System, the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association, Eastern Region (HRSA grant), the Virginia Office of EMS Rescue Squad Assistance Grant program and donations of equipment and supplies by Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, Sentara Williamsburg Medical Center, Norfolk Fire Rescue, Portsmouth Fire Rescue, Suffolk Fire Department, and Sentara Medical Transport.

Both centers illustrate how local healthcare facilities and agencies can work with regional EMS councils to strengthen the regional emergency medical services system.

EMS Testing Schedule

CTS (EMT-Basic practical, and all Virginia State written examinations--begin at 6:00 p.m.)

Jan. 10, 2008 Mt. Empire Community College
 Jan. 31, 2008 Green Valley Baptist Church
 Feb. 21, 2008 Wythe County Technical Center
 March 18, 2008 ... Abingdon High School
 April 10, 2008 Mt. Empire Community College
 April 29, 2008 Green Valley Baptist Church
 May 22, 2008 Wythe County Technical Center
 June 12, 2008 Abingdon High School
 June 26, 2008 Mt. Empire Community College

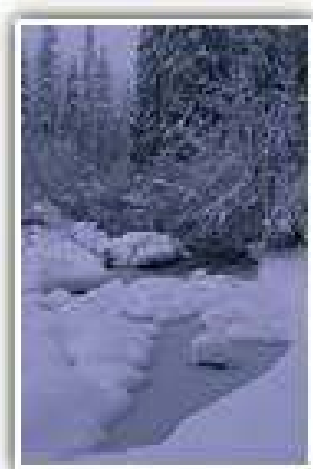
Enhanced Test Sites (begin at 8:00 a.m.)

January 12 ,2008 .. Green Valley Baptist Church
 April 12,, 2008 Abingdon High School
 July 12, 2008 Green Valley Baptist Church
 Ocotber 11, 2008 . Abingdon High School

National Registry Intermediate/Paramedic Practical (begins at 8:00 a.m.)

May 17, 2008 Green Valley Baptist Church

Winter Weather Brings Unique Patient Care Considerations



Hypothermia occurs when heat escapes from the body faster than the body can produce heat. For most people Hypothermia is not a serious condition; however, more than 700 people die each year due to this condition. As the weather turns colder this time of year we as rescuers need to be aware of the potential for this condition.

Many factors can increase the risk of hypothermia including: weather, age, mental impairment, alcohol or drug use, medical conditions, and water conditions to name a few.

As the temperature gets colder the risk for patients to develop Hypothermia increases. Wind also increases the risk for Hypothermia ,especially if the patient is wet. Rescuers should take care to limit patient exposure to the cold temperatures and wind by removing them from the cold environment as soon as possible.

Infants are at a higher risk due to less efficient mechanisms for generating heat. Children usually lose heat faster than a middle age adult. Children have a larger head to body ratio which allows for greater heat loss. Children also may ignore the cold due to poor judgment skills. Examples of poor judgment include not knowing how to dress for the cold weather, having too much fun playing, and not realizing when they are getting too cold and need to warm up.

People with Alzheimer's or other illnesses that cause mental impairments may also be at an increased risk for Hypothermia. Patients with these mental impairments may not understand the additional risks associated with this condition. As with children, these patients may not have the judgment skills to know how to dress or even when to find somewhere warm when they start getting cold.

Patients who use alcohol or drugs are also at a higher risk for developing Hypothermia. Alcohol may make the body feel warm inside; however, it lowers the body's ability to retain heat. Both alcohol and drugs can keep the blood vessels dilated, restrict the body's shivering response, impair judgment, and alter the patient's awareness of weather conditions.

Certain medical conditions may also increase the patient's risk. Some conditions that affect the body's ability to respond to cold or to produce body heat are: hypothyroidism, stroke, severe arthritis, Parkinson's disease, trauma, spinal cord injury, burns, blood vessel or nerve disorders that affect sensation, dehydration and any condition that limits activity or restrains the normal flow of blood.

The first treatment for Hypothermic patients should be, as with all patients, to maintain a patent airway. The patient should be placed in a warm environment, and all wet clothing should be removed. External rewarming should be started as soon as possible. Rescuers should avoid excessive handling of these patients. Patients should receive warmed humidified oxygen and warmed IV solutions. Patients should also be placed on a cardiac monitor and monitored for cardiac arrhythmias. If they are in cardiac arrest, the patient should receive one round of ACLS medications until the patient can be rewarmed.

Upcoming Classes

ALS Refresher	SWVA Community College	Begins Jan. 19, 2008	9:00 a.m.
PHTLS	Oxbow Center, St. Paul	Jan. 26-27, 2008	8:00 a.m.
Enhanced/Cardiac Transition	TBA Wytheville	Begins Jan. 29, 2008	6:00 p.m.
Pediatric ITLS	Bristol Regional Med. Center ..	Feb. 17, 2008	8:00 a.m.
PALS	SWVA Community College	March 8-9, 2008	9:00 a.m.
ALS Refresher	Wythe County Rescue Squad ...	Begins April 15, 2008	9:00 a.m.

EMS Focused Website Provides Legislative Information

The internet is a great tool for us as EMS providers to share information. This article looks at one specific site that provides a lot of useful information for EMS providers.

The website is www.advocatesforems.org. This website deals with various issues in EMS but is relatively new. It was started in 2002, and for such a relatively new organization, it has grown by leaps and bounds. They are a non-profit organization dedicated to helping career and volunteer EMS providers. They focus on such issues as legislation involving EMS and raising lawmaker awareness to the importance of EMS providers in times of crisis and disaster. They encompass all of EMS, whether you are a fire based provider, municipal, third service, volunteer, or hospital based employee.

The website is broken down into many simple categories including the goal and mission of the organization, resources (that includes the breakdown of the major issues that the group focuses on from year to year), and a calendar of events section which highlights future events and conferences they are holding.

This organization is dedicated to helping us in the ever changing world of EMS. As you all know, it seems that our profession is getting more and more attention in the past 4-5 years. This is usually at times of disaster, whether from mother nature or man-made events such as terror attacks.

Be sure and check them out and see where our profession stands from the aspect of our representatives in Washington.

Winter Creates Hazards for EMS Providers

With the winters months coming up, we should take an extra few moments to remind ourselves and our fellow EMS providers (whether coworkers or volunteers) to be on the alert for unseen dangers associated with winter. Ice, snow, and wet weather can affect us and our community in many ways. Common hazards include traffic accidents slips, and falls.



We should be on guard at all times, but with the occasional winter storms and ice events, our chances of getting into an accident increase during the winter months. Risks of both vehicle accidents and falls are increased due to severe cold weather conditions and inclement weather.

We should pay special attention to road hazards associated with winter weather. According to NAEMT, motor vehicle accidents cost employers and agencies \$60 billion annually in medical care, legal expenses and property damage. Lost time due to injury can also translate to lost wages. This is true for employees who lose time due to on-the-job injury and for volunteers who lose time at their regular job due to injury while serving as a volunteer. Accidents can also create a negative image for your department, even if the accident was not your fault. This is particularly true if your agency has had a string of bad luck with more than one accident in a given period of time. Be wary of ice and snow conditions that could cause you to fall as well.

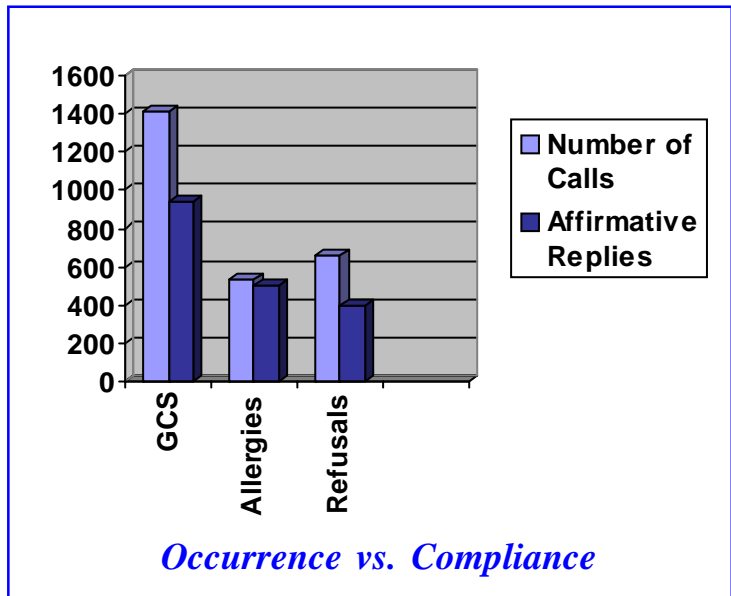
It is also important to remember our basic lifting mechanics. It is very possible that at some point in our EMS career, we may suffer some kind of lower back injury from improper lifting techniques. Using your legs and not your back to lift is paramount.

Pay special attention to the hazards that we will face this winter, and let us look out for and help each other so we can all stay safe this winter season.

First Quarter Regional PI Program Report

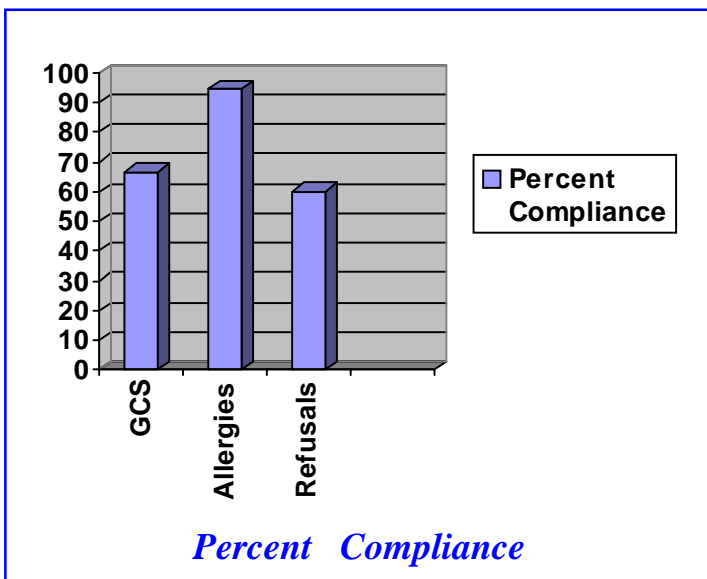
The Southwest Virginia EMS Council would like to thank all of the agencies that submitted PI data for the first quarter for FY 07-08. As of December 18, 2007, we have had 30 agencies submit data. The information that was received has been compiled and reviewed by the Regional PI Committee. The PI Committee was pleased with the results of this information.

The first indicator for the first quarter was documentation of GCS for trauma patients. GCS is used give a reliable, objective way of recording the conscious state of a person, for initial as well as continuing assessment. There were 1,409 trauma related calls reported and of those 940 had GCS documented. This left 469 trauma related calls with no GCS documentation. Reporting EMS agencies documented the GCS in trauma patients 66.71% of the time.



The Second indicator for the first quarter was documentation of patient's allergies to medications. This is important to insure patients do not have adverse effects from medication administration. There were 530 calls where medications were administered to patients and of those 502 had medication allergies documented. Only 28 calls did not have allergies documented. This means that of agencies responding, providers documented the patient's medication allergies at a rate of 94.72%.

The Third indicator for the first quarter was obtaining witness signatures for patient refusals. This is important to provide legal protection for agencies and providers. For agencies replying, there were 657 calls where patients refused treatment and/or transport. Of these, there were 395 calls where a witness signed the patient refusal. This left 262 calls where witness signatures were not obtained. This means that in 60.12% of the calls reported the EMS provider(s) obtained a witness signature on the refusal form.



We would like to thank the following agencies for reporting data: Bristol Life Saving Crew, Laurel Fork Rescue, Haysi Rescue, Scott Co Life Saving Crew, Glade Spring Life Saving Crew, Washington Co Life Saving Crew, Saltville Rescue, Sugar Grove Life Saving Crew, Laurel Rescue, Bland Rescue, Independence Rescue, Rugby Fire and Rescue, Rescue 945, Castlewood Fire and Rescue, Clintwood Rescue, Thomas Walker Rescue, Pound Rescue, Friendship Ambulance, Big Stone Gap Rescue, Tazewell Fire and Rescue, Chilhowie Fire Dept, Hillsville Fire Dept, Jonesville Rescue, Washington County Fire Rescue, Elk Creek Rescue, Baywood Rescue, VA Medflight II, Damascus Rescue, Duffield Rescue, and Life Care Ambulance Service.

EMS Agencies Provide Support for NASCAR Races



EMS Crews respond to a wreck at Bristol Motor Speedway during a late model racing event.

Twice a year, 200,000 wild NASCAR fans, drivers and crews descend on Bristol Motor Speedway for two of the most anticipated races on the NASCAR circuit.

A large quantity of these spectators arrives several days prior to the race, causing our regional population to skyrocket for the week. Emergency Medical Services at the track are provided by Wellmont Health Systems.

Wellmont opens up the opportunity to serve the spectators to local EMS agencies through out the region. Resources utilized from local agencies include ambulances and/or personnel. Working at the track gives the provider the opportunity to work with providers from other states, as well as the opportunity to meet spectators from all over the country.

As you can imagine, many providers and transport units are needed to serve such an event! Agencies or personnel interested in working at Bristol Motor Speedway should contact Earl Carter at ecarter@jetbroadband.com.

Training and Policy News

It's that time of year again when we are in the early planning stages of our upcoming training year. As always, we will be offering our usual "staple" courses. This year, we are going to implement some additional classes to assist in keeping us all on top of our patient care skills! Just a couple of the courses we wish to provide this year are The Difficult Airway Course and Critical Care Paramedic. We are also very excited to announce the addition of our own mini-symposium here in Southwest Virginia. The mini-symposium will be held on June 6th, 7th and 8th at the Holiday Inn Convention Center at Exit 7 in Bristol, Virginia. We will have several 1.5 hour tracks offered to ensure that there is something for everyone. We will have vendors present with items to buy right there on site, as well as a social planned for Saturday night. We will be sending out more information soon. We hope to see everyone there!

The EMS Council will once again be sending out our course request forms to all agencies in the first half of January. Please let your agency administration know if you are interested in hosting a course in your area.

Our Emergency Preparedness & Planning Committee and Training & Education Committee are currently in the process of revising our Regional Council Plans. There are multiple proposed changes, with all revised plans scheduled to be distributed by the end of April. Please feel free to contact our office with any suggestions you may have prior to February 2008.




Council T-Shirt Orders Now Being Accepted

The Southwest Virginia EMS Council will once again be selling T-Shirts. The Council logo will be on the front left side and on the back will be EMS in big letters. The cost will be as follows: regular t-shirts \$12.00, long sleeve \$15.00, regular sweatshirt \$20.00, and hooded sweatshirt \$25.00. If you would like to purchase one or have questions, please feel free to call Kathy White Administrative Assistant at 276-628-4151 ext. 22 or via e-mail at kwhite@vaems.org. Please allow a couple of weeks for orders to be filled due to quantity issues.

Funding for this project provided by the Virginia Department of Health Office of Emergency Medical Services.

Submit your article or photo by May 16, 2008, for inclusion in the next edition of *Star of Life*. Articles may be submitted electronically at southwest@vaems.org


Southwest Virginia EMS Council
1000 West Main Street
Abingdon, VA 24210



...and Best Wishes
for the New Year.

*From the Board of Directors and Staff of
the Southwest Virginia EMS Council.*