

EMSA Dispatch

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EMSA Director Elizabeth Basnett Appointed to Prestigious Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Services

EMSA is proud to announce that Director Elizabeth Basnett has been appointed to the Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Services (FICEMS) as a state EMS director representative. This prestigious appointment, made by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), recognizes Director Basnett's expertise and dedication to enhancing EMS service delivery.

FICEMS, established in 2005 by U.S. Congress, coordinates federal efforts to support EMS and 911 systems at all levels of government. The National Highway Traffic Administration within DOT provides administrative support to the committee.

Director Basnett's appointment to FICEMS is a testament to her commitment to advancing EMS. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition! EMSA is proud to have you at the helm as we continue building an EMS system in California that puts patients first!

CARESTAR Foundation Supports EMSA's Equity Initiatives with \$400,000 Grant

BY KEN PAGLIA

"Equality is leaving the door open for anyone who has the means to approach it; equity is ensuring there is a pathway to that door for those who need it."

-- CAROLINE BELDEN

In July, the CARESTAR Foundation awarded EMSA a \$400,000 grant to advance the development of a more equitable, effective, and innovative EMS system in California! The two-year grant will help fund three key initiatives:

- **Defining Equity and Transparency:** EMSA will lead statewide discussions to create definitions for equity, transparency, and resilience in EMS and develop an equity metrics framework to analyze and monitor the California EMS system.
- **Enhancing Community Paramedicine and Triage to Alternate Destinations:** The project will update toolkits for Community Paramedicine and Triage to Alternate Destinations (TAD) in alignment with AB 767 (Community Paramedicine or Triage to Alternate Destination Act). EMSA will also host regional workshops to encourage the development of these programs.
- **Hosting a Data Summit:** In 2025, EMSA will organize a two-day data summit to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders to improve equity in EMS care. Proposed modules will include improving equity, CP, TAD, STEMI Stroke, EMS for children, and ambulance off-load times.

“We are immensely grateful to the CARESTAR Foundation for their commitment to this journey,” said EMSA Director Liz Basnett. “We’re excited to be working together on this transformative path—guided by principles of equity, transparency, and patient-centeredness!”

As EMSA continues its equity work, we encourage community partners to reach out with fresh perspectives or innovative ideas! Comments and feedback can be sent to EMSA.ExternalAffairs@emsa.ca.gov.

The CARESTAR Foundation’s vision is to improve health outcomes for all Californians by using a racial equity lens to advocate for improvements in emergency and prehospital care. Learn more at carestarfoundation.org.

Summer Water Safety: DMS Deputy Division Chief and Rescue Diver Offers Insight

BY KEN PAGLIA

Todd Frandsen, Deputy Division Chief for EMSA’s Disaster Medical Services Division has had an extensive career as a scuba and rescue diver. His experience spans swift water rescue, cave diving, and teaching beginners to become certified scuba divers! With the summer heat in full swing, EMSA sat down with Todd to discuss water safety. Here’s the expertise he shared: Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. If you’re out on the ocean you’re more likely to get dehydrated. The heat zaps the water out of you, so stay on top of your hydration.

Keep an eye on your kids and use alcohol in moderation. Safety should always be the priority, especially when children are involved.

Don't get in over your head with water activities like rafting or diving. If you're planning a trip to a river with high flows, like the Feather or American River, ask yourself: "What business do I have being there?"

Always wear your life preserver. It's not an ego thing; it's a safety measure. Even the best swimmers can get fatigued, and a life preserver allows you to rest.

Have fun but know the environment. When it comes to any type of water—you have to respect it! Your behaviors need to adapt accordingly with salt water versus fresh water. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

And perhaps most importantly: Know your hazards. For instance, is it safe to be in the water near dusk, or is midday better? If you're unfamiliar with the risks around a body of water, visit a dive shop, local chamber of commerce, or water-related business. They can guide you on which areas to avoid.

Do a little research! You don't have to become a marine scientist, but taking the extra time to understand the environment can keep you and your loved ones safe.

2024 EMS Awards Nominations Open!

BY KEN PAGLIA

EMSA is excited to announce that nominations are now open for the 2024 EMS Awards, recognizing individuals and teams for exceptional acts of service in the field of EMS during the 2024 calendar year.

This year, the nomination process has been streamlined for a more seamless experience. Additionally, three new award categories have been introduced: Paramedic of the Year, Dispatcher of the Year, and Mobile Intensive Care Nurse of the Year.

To nominate a deserving individual or team, visit emsa.ca.gov/awards, review the award categories, and click "Nominate an EMS Hero."

Award winners include not only firefighters, paramedics, EMTs, and law enforcement officers, but also civilians who have performed outstanding acts of service, as well as EMS educators, administrators, medical directors, nurses, and more.

“The 2024 EMS Awards is an opportunity to recognize the best emergency responders in California. It's our favorite event each year because it lets us showcase stories of heroism and selfless service and highlight the vital role of EMS in our communities,” said EMSA Deputy Director Ashley Williams.

Nominations are open through January 10, and winners will be recognized at a ceremony in southern California in May 2025.

“Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate the heroes in your community!” said Williams.

EMSA is also seeking sponsors to help us celebrate this year's EMS heroes. If you are interested in supporting the EMS Awards, please contact us at EMSA.ExternalAffairs@emsa.ca.gov.

When A Health Crisis Hits

BY LESLIE WITTEN-ROOD

A college fraternity brother gets hit by a car on a snowy night and suffers a massive head injury. A young mother has a stroke following the birth of her third child. An elderly nursing home resident with mild dementia gets pneumonia. Sudden injury or illness can happen at any time to anyone of any age; compounding chronic illnesses affect the vast majority of people over 60. When a health crisis hits, decisions must be made – by whom and what should they be?

In California, there are two documents that can be extremely helpful in these situations: the Advance Health Care Directive (AHCD) and the Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST). The AHCD does two things: (a) It allows a person to officially appoint a “healthcare agent” and grants them durable medical power of attorney to make healthcare decisions when the person is not able to for themselves; and (b) It provides an opportunity to express preferences for end-of-life and other critical medical decisions such as life-sustaining treatment, organ donation, and autopsy. The AHCD is appropriate for any (and all!) adults; it must be completed by the person when they have decision-making capacity and signed in the presence of two witnesses or a notary. POLST is designed for people who are seriously ill, medically frail, or elderly and thus may be in frequent need of medical attention when they are not able to speak for themselves. For instance, a person with heart failure receiving care at home, a resident in a skilled nursing facility, a teenager with advanced cancer would all benefit from having a POLST. POLST is a standardized form that details clear choices about resuscitation, scope/goals of treatment overall, and artificial nutrition; it's especially helpful in quickly communicating a basic set of instructions through transfers. The POLST must be signed by the person or their

legally authorized decision maker (e.g., healthcare agent or guardian) and a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant. When properly signed, the POLST is a medical order, which must by law be honored across all health settings.

Here are the main differences between an AHCD and a POLST:

AHCD:

Who is it for? Any adult.

What makes it legal? Proper signatures, person + witnesses or notary.

What is role of healthcare agent (DPOA-HC)? Appointed by the directive.

What is its basic function? Appoints agent; expresses person's preferences.

POLST:

Who is it for? Anyone with a serious illness (incl. minors), frailty, or advanced age.

What makes it legal? Proper signatures, patient or healthcare decision maker & physician/NP/PA.

What is role of healthcare agent (DPOA-HC)? Can be completed/ updated by an agent.

What is its basic function? Portable medical order set to manage transitions.

The effectiveness of both forms depends on many factors, but two are absolutely crucial:

- (1) A process of thoughtful consideration and conversation among the person, their loved ones, and their healthcare providers must accompany completion of the form. Decisions about treatment for serious illness or care at the end of life are never easy: They are informed by deeply personal values, commitments, and desires. They depend on clear understanding of diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment options. Approaching the forms as a rapid "check-the-box" chore will not give a good result. The most thoughtfully prepared forms are useless unless decision makers and loved ones know about them and are "on board."
- (2) Healthcare providers in all settings must understand their responsibilities in helping patients complete the forms, documenting and locating them

when needed, and honoring the instructions to the extent legally required and medically possible.

EMSA, in collaboration with the CCCC, will be conducting POLST Healthcare Provider Knowledge Surveys this month to assess the current knowledge level and identify any areas needing improvement. We will be surveying healthcare providers across the state.

These aggregate survey results will guide quality improvement efforts to enhance provider education around POLST before the ePOLST registry launches. This survey is designed to assess current knowledge of POLST program features and procedures across a wide range of healthcare providers and settings. EMSA and CCCC will be distributing a survey soon so be on the lookout for it!

More information on Advance Care Planning and Advance Health Care Directives can be found on the website of the Coalition for Compassionate Care of California, here:

<https://coalitionccc.org/CCCC/CCCC/Resources/Advance-Care-Planning-Tools-and-Resources.aspx>

More information on POLST can be found on the website of California POLST, here: <https://capolst.org/polst-for-healthcare-providers/>

New Online System for Paramedic License Reinstatement Now Live: Quick and Easy Reinstatement for Licenses Lapsed 0-6 Months

BY KIM LEW

On August 12, 2024, the Paramedic Licensure Unit (PLU) went “Live” for allowing reinstatement of licenses lapsed 0-6 months.

To use this online system, please visit emsonline.emsa.ca.gov/eGov/Login.

1. If you do not already have an account, please create one, or if you have an existing account please log-in with your username and password.
2. Click the yellow “Reinstate a License” button,
3. Click the License you wish to Reinstate, click the “Continue” button,
4. Select “Lapsed < 6 Month” from the Method drop down menu, and
5. Click the “Start” button to begin processing your reinstatement application.

To find further information on how to utilize the Online Licensure Portal, please visit <https://emsa.ca.gov/online-licensing-information/>

EMS Awards Honor Emergency Service Heroes

WRITTEN BY KEN PAGLIA

This year's EMS Awards ceremony—which recognized outstanding acts of service from 2023—was held on May 8 at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena. EMSA presented 12 awards this year to individuals who demonstrated exceptional dedication, courage, and leadership in the EMS community.

Award winners included firefighters, EMTs, law enforcement officers, doctors, directors, educators, administrators, and civilians who acted bravely in the face of danger.

The awards were a testament to the recipients' commitment to saving lives and improving emergency medical care in California.

“It was an incredible privilege to recognize our award winners for their extraordinary dedication,” said EMSA Deputy Director Ashley Williams. “The EMS Awards is close to my heart as it allows us to honor first responders and others who go above and beyond in the line of duty. The stories of heroism and selfless service remind us of the importance of EMS in our communities.”

Approximately 250 people attended this year's ceremony including EMS professionals, family members, and distinguished guests where EMS Division Chief Tom McGinnis rocked the mic as the MC.

The keynote speaker for the event was CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Mike Marcucci, who delivered an inspiring speech highlighting the importance of emergency services and the dedication of those who work tirelessly to protect our communities. Chief Marcucci also peppered his remarks with fun facts about Napa Valley and wines, which was a nice touch!

Among the most heartfelt moments of the evening was when the family of Eddie Gerardo Cervantes, a 41-year-old Manteca man, shared the story of his heroic actions in October 2023. Cervantes tragically lost his life while attempting to save a woman and her 5-year-old daughter after their car went into the San Joaquin River. His selfless act, along with the efforts of bystanders and first responders, ultimately helped save the life of the child.

The EMS Awards serve as a reminder of the life-saving impact that EMS professionals have on the community.

The Lasting Impact of Honoring First Responders

WRITTEN BY KEN PAGLIA

I didn't know my dad growing up, but I did know two things about him: He was a firefighter in San Mateo County, and he rode a Harley.

I don't have many photos of my dad; a few of him on his motorcycle and one of him in an Army uniform when he was younger.

But I do have a newspaper article about him. It's from a 1976 edition of the San Mateo Times, and it's an article about him and two other firefighters winning an Award for Valor from the California State Firemen's Association. The award recognized the firefighters for trying to rescue two babies from a burning home. They went into the home and searched for the babies in thick smoke and 600-degree heat. Only one of the babies survived.

I keep a screenshot of the article on my phone, and I look at it from time to time.

I thought about the article while preparing for EMSA's EMS Awards this year, which was held on May 8 at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena. The EMS Awards honor extraordinary acts of heroism and leadership by first responders, EMS professionals, and civilians in the field of emergency medical services.

EMSA's external affairs team organized the EMS Awards (led by rockstar Deputy Director Ashley Williams). It was my first time helping with the event, and I was struck by all the details that went into the planning process. But I felt inspired to make it the best awards ceremony possible. And it was truly a wonderful and inspiring event.

A few days after the EMS Awards, on Mother's Day, I called my mom and told her about the successful event and mentioned the article about my dad. At the end of the conversation she said,
"Did you know he was a paramedic before he was a firefighter?"

I didn't know that my dad was a paramedic, and now I work for a department that supports first responders like him. The universe works in mysterious ways.

The article about my dad is proof to me of the lasting impact of these types of awards and the value of recognizing first responders for their commitment to saving lives. After all, it's been 47 years since my dad and his colleagues were given their award and since the San Mateo Times published a brief article about it. And it still means a lot to me.

California EMS Information System (CEMSIS) Transition

WRITTEN BY TOM MCGINNIS

CEMSIS first started as a demonstration project for improving EMS data across California. Today, CEMSIS is a statewide database that offers a secure, centralized data system for collecting data about individual emergency medical service requests, patients treated at hospitals, and EMS provider organizations. CEMSIS uses the universal standard for how patient care information resulting from an emergency 9-1-1 call for assistance is collected called the National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS).

When CEMSIS was first on the NEMSIS standard in 2013 and using version 2.2.1, 17 LEMSAs were participating with 165 EMS providers and received 910,384 EMS records the same year. Then, when CEMSIS transitioned to version 3.4, CEMSIS had 33 LEMSAs participating with 566 EMS providers and received 5,350,450 EMS records (in both version 3.4 and 3.5) for one year in 2023. As we transitioned again from version 3.4 to version 3.5, CEMSIS now has all 34 LEMSAs participating for the very first time since CEMSIS was established! Currently, with all 34 LEMSAs participating, we are receiving data from 509 EMS providers and have received 2,362,238 EMS records to date. It is anticipated that CEMSIS will receive over six million records by the end of 2024.

The data collected serves to provide an image of the EMS system, the number and types of patients being cared for, and the EMS and hospital institutions and individuals who are providing that care. As more data becomes available to the EMS Authority, that image will sharpen. As the reliability of the data improves, answers to questions about the quality of the care provided to EMS patients will be possible.

EMSA CAL-MAT Teams Support Wildfire Response

WRITTEN BY TIM REED

EMSA has deployed several California Medical Assistance Teams (CAL-MAT) this year to support firefighters and other first responders in the field during California's wildfire season.

CAL-MATs have assisted in the response to the Park Fire in Butte and Tehama Counties as well as several other wildfires such as the Thompson Fire in Oroville. A total of 8 teams deployed so far this year.

When activated for deployment, team members become paid temporary emergency hires to support wildfires and other disasters statewide.

"CAL-MAT members sacrifice time away from their families, homes, and careers to provide essential medical care for firefighters, as well other services to protect our communities. As wildfire season intensifies in California, we are truly grateful for their support behind the scenes," said EMSA Division Chief Tim Reed.

The CAL-MAT program is modeled after the federal Disaster Medical Assistance Team, known as DMAT. The state program works to close the gap between local and federal response during major medical disasters. Team members provide medical treatment, first aid, disaster triage, immunization, prescribing and dispensing medications, patient evaluation, administrative support, logistics, and more.

"Let's stand together to support our brave firefighters, response teams, and families affected by wildfires," said Reed.

EMSA is the lead agency responsible for coordinating California's medical response to disasters and provides medical resources to local governments in support of disaster response.

EMSA's Strategic Reorganization: Aligning for Enhanced Efficiency and Operational Excellence

WRITTEN BY ASHLEY WILLIAMS

EMSA is undergoing a strategic reorganization to better manage its growing workload and improve operational efficiency. This change addresses the increased demands on the department due to new and expanded programs within the Systems Division and the EMS Personnel Division. The reorganization aims to streamline the reporting structure, enhance managerial oversight, and ensure that EMSA continues to fulfill its mission of providing high-quality emergency medical services across California.

Quality and Planning Division

The Quality and Planning Division, previously the Systems Division, which is responsible for developing and implementing EMS systems across California. This division oversees thirteen critical program areas, including EMS System Planning, EMS Transportation, Poison Control, and EMS for Children, among others. These programs play a vital role in coordinating EMS system development and ensuring the effective delivery of emergency services statewide.

A newly established SSM III position will oversee the entire division, providing leadership and strategic direction.

Professional Standards Division

The Professional Standards Division, previously the EMS Personnel Division, which oversees licensing, enforcement, and EMS personnel standards, will also be reorganized into two branches: the Enforcement Branch and the Licensing, Standards, and Training Branch.

A newly established SSM III (Managerial) position will manage the entire division, while a new SSM I (Supervisory) position will oversee the Standards Unit. These changes are aimed at better balancing the workload, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, and improving the division's overall efficiency.

Maintaining Commitment Amidst Change

While the structure of EMSA's divisions will change, the department's commitment to its mission remains strong. The reorganization is designed to address operational challenges and position EMSA to better serve California's emergency medical services system, ensuring that high standards of care are consistently met.

We're Hiring!

Looking for a meaningful career in emergency medical services? EMSA is hiring! Join our team and contribute to enhancing public safety and healthcare across California. Check out our current vacancies and take the next step in your career journey.

Check out the different opportunities at calcareers.ca.gov/

We Want to Hear From You: Share Your Ideas for Our Next Newsletter!

At EMSA, we believe that collaboration is key to our success, and that includes hearing from our valued partners. We're always looking for fresh ideas and content that resonate with our community, and who better to ask than you?

Do you have a topic you'd love to see covered in our next newsletter? Whether it's a spotlight on a particular aspect of emergency medical services, an inspiring success story, or a feature on an innovative project, we want to hear your thoughts!

Send your ideas to EMSA.externalaffairs@emsa.ca.gov

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