

EMSA Dispatch Feb. 2026

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Leap Forward in 2026

By Director Basnett

As we move into 2026, it would be unrealistic and disingenuous not to acknowledge the moment we are in.

Across California, the nation, and the world, communities are navigating uncertainty, rapid change, and complex challenges that touch nearly every aspect of daily life. For those of us in emergency medical services, this environment is not abstract. It shows up in our emergency departments, on our roadways, in our communities, and in the experiences of the patients we serve every day.

In times like these, EMS plays a steady role. We show up. We adapt. We coordinate across systems. And we remain focused on what matters most: patient care, public safety, and the people who dedicate their careers to serving others in moments of need.

At EMSA, 2025 was a year defined by both challenge and progress. We supported large-scale disaster response efforts, strengthened partnerships across state and local agencies, advanced data-driven approaches to system improvement, and continued modernizing regulations to better reflect today's realities. None of this work happens in isolation. It is made possible through collaboration, with Local EMS Agencies, healthcare partners, first responders, state departments, and the many professionals who make California's EMS system one of the strongest in the nation.

As we look ahead, “leaping forward” does not mean moving recklessly or ignoring the complexities around us. It means being thoughtful stewards of public resources, investing in a capable and compassionate workforce, and remaining responsive to the evolving needs of our communities. It means listening to our partners, engaging stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, and making decisions guided by data, experience, and shared responsibility. This issue of EMSA Dispatch reflects that commitment. Inside, you’ll find examples of collaboration, resilience, and progress, from disaster response and workforce development to regulatory improvements and statewide recognition of excellence in EMS.

Even in uncertain times, the mission of EMS remains constant. EMSA is proud to stand alongside our partners as we continue to strengthen California’s emergency medical system together, with purpose, and with care.

Save the Date: California EMS Awards – June 2, 2026

As we move into the New Year, we invite you to mark your calendars for a truly meaningful tradition: the 2025 California EMS Awards ceremony, set for Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in the heart of Napa Valley.

EMSA’s EMS Awards is California’s only statewide celebration honoring the extraordinary dedication of EMS professionals. This event belongs to all of us: paramedics, EMTs, firefighters, law enforcement, nurses, medical directors, dispatchers, administrators, and even civilian heroes who step forward in moments of crisis. The 2025 EMS Awards celebrates those who demonstrated uncommon bravery, innovative leadership, and selfless service during the 2025 calendar year.

The EMS Awards offer a rare and well-deserved opportunity for our statewide family to pause, reflect, and celebrate the individuals and teams who go above and beyond, and colleagues whose actions inspire us all to be better.

Set in the heart of Napa Valley, this elegant evening brings together EMS leaders and supporters for inspiration, connection, and heartfelt recognition. It’s more

than an awards ceremony; it's a reaffirmation of the profound sense of purpose that unites our field.

Tickets for the 2025 EMS Awards will go on sale in March and will be available at ems.ca.gov/awards. We encourage you to plan early.

Please save June 2, 2026, on your calendar. We look forward to gathering as one EMS community to honor the very best among us.

EMSA Partners with CDCR to Support Patient Care with Surplus Hospital Beds

Honoring our commitment to resource stewardship and interagency collaboration, EMSA is partnering with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to provide hospital beds for patient care in CDCR facilities.

These Joerns healthcare beds were originally purchased during the COVID-19 pandemic to bolster statewide surge capacity. Now surplus in EMSA's warehouse, the beds are being repurposed rather than left idle, ensuring state-owned medical equipment continues to serve Californians in need.

"We're transferring these beds to help a state partner with patient care. It's smart use of resources, and we take pride in being good stewards of our state's resources," said Tim Reed, EMSA's Disaster Medical Services Chief.

This collaboration highlights EMSA's role in strengthening California's emergency medical system and leveraging resources for those who need it most.

One Year Later: Reflecting on the 2025 L.A. Wildfire Response

January 7 marked the solemn one-year anniversary of the devastating wildfires in Southern California that destroyed countless homes and businesses, displacing families and disrupting communities.

As communities continue to rebuild, EMSA remains grateful to firefighters, first responders, and our CAL-MAT teams for their unwavering commitment to recovery efforts.

During the Palisades and Eaton Fires, EMSA provided medical services at CAL FIRE base camps.

EMSA personnel treated 291 patients and transported 9 individuals during the Palisades Fire. Personnel treated 166 patients and transported 22 during the Eaton Fire.

These operations ensured continuous on-scene medical coverage, rapid patient movement, and strengthened coordination with local and regional partners throughout the 2025 LA wildfire response.

During that time, we saw endless dedication from our CAL-MAT teams, Southern California Regional Disaster Medical Health Coordinators and Specialists, and LEMSA. We couldn't have done our part without the participation and involvement from our external stakeholders," said Tim Reed, Division Chief of EMSA's Disaster Medical Services.

As rebuilding efforts continue, EMSA is grateful for the collaboration between state, local, and regional partners. We deeply appreciate everyone's service and dedication.

EMSA Invites Stakeholder Input on Permanent Regulations

The public comment period is now open for proposed permanent statewide regulations addressing Ambulance Patient Offload Times (APOT). The comment period opened January 16 and will run through March 4, 2026.

Ambulance patient offload delays, often referred to as "wall times," continue to place strain on EMS providers and hospital systems across California. The regulations were enacted to address this challenge by requiring hospitals to develop and submit plans aimed at reducing offload delays and improving patient flow.

Emergency regulations contributing to these efforts were approved last year. EMSA is now working to finalize permanent regulations that provide clear, consistent guidance on required plan elements and submission expectations. These regulations are designed to support hospitals, EMS providers, and local EMS agencies in implementing practical, data-informed solutions.

As part of this process, EMSA is actively facilitating collaboration among hospitals, EMS providers, and local EMS agencies. This includes reviewing APOT reduction protocols, sharing best practices, and leveraging monthly analysis of more than 200,000 APOT records to support transparency through public reporting.

“Every comment submitted will be reviewed to ensure stakeholders’ voices are heard,” said EMSA Branch Chief Adam Davis.

Comments may be submitted at ems.ca.gov/public_comment.

Celebrate California's EMS Heroes: Sponsor the 2025 EMS Awards!

Imagine an elegant evening in the heart of Napa Valley, surrounded by the EMS community as we honor bravery, leadership, and innovation of California's EMS professionals.

EMSA is thrilled to host the 2025 EMS Awards on June 2, 2026, at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena. The event will recognize outstanding contributions of EMS professionals who made a difference during the 2025 calendar year.

We cordially invite organizations like yours to partner with us as sponsors.

Your sponsorship will directly fund the awards ceremony and allow us to showcase your support to California's EMS leadership.

Sponsorship plays a vital role in inspiring EMS professionals across the state. Every contribution helps create an unforgettable experience that celebrates excellence and leadership in the EMS community.

For full details on sponsorship opportunities, visit ems.ca.gov/awards and click “Become An EMS Awards Sponsor!”

We deeply appreciate the important work you do and hope to welcome you to St. Helena on June 2!

Keeping EMSA Moving Forward: Administrative Services in Action

Much of EMSA's work happens where it is most visible during emergencies, in the field, and through statewide initiatives. But the ability to respond, coordinate, and deliver on those commitments depends on a foundation that often operates behind the scenes.

EMSA's Administrative Services Division provides that foundation. This progress has strengthened operations and improved EMSA's capacity to support programs, interagency coordination, and response efforts.

Administrative Services plays a critical role in keeping EMSA's work moving, managing contracts and procurement, supporting staffing and onboarding, maintaining fiscal accountability, and ensuring operational continuity across divisions. These functions may not always be visible, but they directly enable EMSA staff to focus on program delivery, stakeholder engagement, and patient-centered outcomes.

Looking ahead, the division is focused on strengthening resilience and efficiency through cross-training, process improvements, and proactive planning. This work helps ensure EMSA can adapt quickly, support its workforce effectively, and remain responsive in an increasingly complex operational environment.

Over the past year, the division reached an important milestone by becoming fully staffed, supported by strategic position reclassifications that better align roles with the organization's evolving needs.

Training That Shows Up When It Matters

When someone calls 911, they don't think about training standards or program approvals. They expect the person who shows up to know what to do.

That expectation is what drives the work of EMSA's Training & Workforce Unit.

The unit sets and maintains statewide training standards for first aid, CPR, and basic and advanced life support. It also reviews and approves training and continuing education programs that serve EMTs, paramedics, childcare providers, school bus drivers, public safety personnel, and members of the public across California.

This work is not theoretical. It directly affects how prepared people are when an emergency happens, in an ambulance, a classroom, a bus, or a workplace. In addition to setting standards, the Training & Workforce Unit provides technical support to training program directors, continuing education providers, and all 34 Local EMS Agencies. That support helps ensure expectations are clear, training is consistent, and providers across the state are working from the same playbook.

Today, EMSA oversees training programs that serve tens of thousands of EMTs, paramedics, childcare professionals, and public safety personnel. While much of this work happens out of the spotlight, its impact is felt every day in the quality and reliability of emergency care delivered across California.

Questions or requests for assistance can be directed to childcare@ems.ca.gov or workforce@ems.ca.gov.

EMSA's Call for Disaster Response Heroes

EMSA is ramping up recruitment for three vital programs: the California Medical Assistance Team (CAL-MAT), the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), and Disaster Healthcare Volunteers (DHV). Whether you're a medical expert or a support specialist, there's a role for you in supporting California communities during disasters!

EMSA's California Medical Assistance Team (CAL-MAT) is the department's statewide program. CAL-MAT members become paid temporary emergency hires when activated. EMSA is currently recruiting medical and non-medical professionals to provide support during disasters such as wildfires.

The federally backed Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) mobilizes volunteers at the local (usually county) level. MRC roles often involve shorter commitments, so they're ideal for those who want to balance volunteering with other responsibilities.

If you'd like to be on-call during large-scale crises, California's Disaster Healthcare Volunteers (DHV) program could be a great fit. The DHV program preregisters, manages, and mobilizes healthcare professionals, and is part of an effort to streamline volunteer integration during disasters.

EMSA needs a diverse range of occupations across these programs—from nurses and paramedics to logisticians and administrators.

Connect with EMSA on Social Media!

Don't miss out on real-time updates and highlights! Here's how you can connect:

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[X](#)

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@ems.ca.gov.

