

**NORTHWEST COMMUNITY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SYSTEM**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2011-2015**

2011 Revisions

Prepared by:

Connie J. Mattera, M.S., R.N.
EMS Administrative Director

Approved by:

John Ortinau, M.D., FACEP
EMS Medical Director

Reviewed/approved:

Advisory Board: March 17, 2011
Chiefs/Administrators:

Pillars of Excellence

MISSION

The Northwest Community Emergency Medical Services System is a team of highly educated emergency specialists committed to providing quality emergency care to the communities we serve.

We continue to strive for preeminence through a philosophy of total quality, continuous improvement, and advocating the appropriate use of technology and research to compassionately meet emergency care needs.

VISION

The Northwest Community EMS System is viewed as the gold standard of prehospital quality by our customers and colleagues.

System initiatives are collaborative endeavors planned, organized, and implemented by multidisciplinary teams of system members.

VALUES

- The system culture embraces excellence as a core value.
- Customer satisfaction drives all processes and products.
- Fiscal responsibility and careful stewardship of all human and economic resources is the cornerstone of business planning.
- Fair and equitable due process governs all relational disputes.
- Each person is accountable for their own actions.
- Each system member has equal value and an equal opportunity to contribute to system activities.
- The system conducts all business in adherence to its code of ethics.
- Education is fundamental to professional growth and clinical excellence.

MOTTO

"Quality People, Quality Education, Quality Care"

The mission, vision, and value statements were reaffirmed by the System Advisory Board on March 21, 2002. These belief statements undergird the foundation of all System planning and activities.

EXTERNAL FORCES IMPACTING OUR PLANNING

National Statutes, Standards, Guidelines, Models

In August, 1996, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau, published the ***Emergency Medical Services Agenda for the Future***. The "Agenda" is a consensus document created, endorsed, and embraced by the national EMS community through a Steering Committee and a Blue Ribbon Conference.

It examined the past three decades of EMS, capsulated the state of EMS in 1996, and looked ahead to create a vision for the future. The authors designed it to be used by government and private organizations at the national, state, and local levels to guide planning, decision making, and policy development regarding EMS.

Planners envisioned EMS systems of the future as being community-based and fully integrated with the over-all health system. They believed that EMS personnel should have the ability to identify and modify illness and injury risks, provide acute illness and injury care and follow-up, and contribute to treatment of chronic conditions and community health monitoring. These new entities should be developed from redistribution of existing health care resources and integrated with other health care providers and public health and public safety agencies. This design would improve community health and result in a more appropriate use of acute health care resources. EMS would remain the public's emergency medical safety net. The "Agenda" proposed continued development of 14 attributes of an effective EMS system. The NWC EMSS Advisory Board combined them into 12 strategic initiatives. For a full text of the "Agenda" access the NHTSA web site at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Emergency Medical Services at the Crossroads (2006) is the work of The Committee on the Future of Emergency Care in the United States Health System. The Committee was tasked with examining the full scope of emergency care, from 9-1-1 and medical dispatch to hospital-based emergency and trauma care. They envisioned a system in which all communities would be served by well planned and highly coordinated emergency care services that are accountable for their performance. All EMS and public safety officers should be fully interconnected to ensure that each patient receives the most appropriate care, at the optimal location, with the minimum delay.

Further documents influencing the NWC EMSS strategic plan: Emergency Medical Services Agenda for the Future Implementation Guide; National EMS Education Agenda for the Future (2000); National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint; National Core Content: The Domain of EMS Practice; The National EMS Scope of Practice Model; National Guidelines for Educating EMS Instructors; and the National EMS Education Standards approved in January 2009. The Education standards represent a collaborative effort involving the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the National Association of EMS Educators to replace the old DOT National Standard Curricula (NSC). Additional resources include the National EMS Research Agenda and Federal, CDC, and State directives with respect to emergency preparedness planning; and **IDPH adoption of the National EMS Information System (NEMSIS) data sets**. See Appendixes for full background information.

State Statutes, Standards, Guidelines, Models

The Illinois EMS Act and Trauma Center Code and the corresponding EMS Rules and Regulations and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Division of EMS & Highway Safety EMS Strategic Plan approved September 2010 significantly impact this document.

The NWC EMSS plan reflects a balance of effectiveness, efficiency and equity. We must plan based on community and customer needs, regulatory requirements, national standards, and technological advances while being ever considerate of scarce human and economic resources that must be applied in a manner that optimizes the preparation and competency of EMS personnel and promotes the safety, health and welfare of all patients using best practice models.

"Wise men make more opportunities than they find." Sir Francis Bacon

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

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INTEGRATION of HEALTH SERVICES

Impact statements

Integration of health care services helps to ensure that the care provided by EMS does not occur in isolation and that positive effects are enhanced by linkages with other community health resources and integration within the health care system (EMS Agenda for the Future).

"Out-of-facility care is an integral component of the health care system. EMS focuses on out-of-facility care and also supports efforts to implement cost-effective community health care. By integrating with other health system components EMS improves health care for the entire community, including children, the elderly, and others with special needs" (Alasdair K.T. Conn, M.D.).

Integration of EMS into the health care system is essential to adequately plan for and respond to threats to national security, disasters with mass casualties and pandemic diseases. This integration will expand the traditional roles of EMS providers, assist in offsetting healthcare provider shortages, expand healthcare networks for the consumer, and assist in addressing the special needs of all segments of the population.

Position

The NWC EMSS believes it is imperative that we are a key voice in proactively setting reasonable expectations of performance and determining the use and deployment of EMS personnel in non-traditional roles **as those needs are identified.**

Actions

1. The NWC EMSS views this as an evolving priority that should be carefully watched, especially with respect to the foreseeable implications to human resource allocation, reimbursements, selection of receiving facilities, and expanded scope of practice.
2. The System encourages participants to serve as members of Illinois Medical Emergency Response Teams (IMERT) or other disaster response teams.
3. The System advocates EMS participation in community projects such as immunization clinics, prevention programs (Ex: stroke, heart attack, diabetes, abuse), community education (CPR, appropriate use of EMS)/public access to defibrillation (PAD) programs, and as liaisons to community groups involved in public health and disaster planning.
4. Interested EMS personnel are encouraged to advance their education and/or to fill vacancies in health care facilities. If a nursing shortage occurs, it will create hardships for some hospitals and ambulatory care facilities. Paramedics and EMTs are well qualified for nurse expander roles and to serve on multi-disciplinary teams.
5. All System members shall remain proactive in identifying the special healthcare needs of the communities served by the System.

EMS RESEARCH

Impact statement

"The future of EMS is indelibly linked to the future of EMS research. This reality provides EMS with its greatest opportunities, its greatest risks, and its greatest single need to depart from the ways of the past. EMS must grasp this quickly closing window of opportunity" (EMS Agenda for the Future).

"It is clear that EMS must be integrated with other services and systems that are intended to maintain and improve community health and ensure its safety. We must also focus on aspects of EMS that improve its science, strengthen its infrastructure, and broaden its involvement in enhancing the health of our communities" (EMS Agenda for the Future).

"Research is the means by which the goal of advancing and improving the system responsible for prehospital emergency patient care will take place" (National EMS Research Agenda).

Performance of high quality EMS research is hindered by five major impediments:

1. Inadequate funding;
2. A lack of integrated information systems that provide for meaningful linkage with patient outcomes;
3. A paucity of academic research institutions with long-term commitments to EMS systems research;
4. Overly restrictive informed consent interpretations; and
5. A lack of education by EMS personnel regarding the importance of EMS research.

Position

The NWC EMSS believes that the foundation for quality health care practice, education, and systems management is an evidence base obtained from rigorous scientific study. This is true for prehospital clinical practice, the curricula for educating prehospital providers, and EMS system design (National Research Agenda). The System will play a significant role in emergency and out-of-hospital research on a local, regional, and national level. Human, financial, and technical resources are essential in conducting valid studies and, therefore, creative fund raising and capital support will be imperative to meeting this goal.

Actions

1. The System shall insist on a scientific basis for prehospital practice. New interventions, educational techniques, curricula, system design, and operating procedures shall be subjected to scientific scrutiny before they are implemented (National EMS Research Agenda).
2. Continue to capitalize on funding streams through grants, foundations, academic institutions, or pharmaceutical companies to support the cost EMS research and/or a System research assistant. (NWC EMSS staff).
3. Create a collaborative relationship between the EMS System, medical schools, other academic institutions, and private foundations to promote and fund EMS research. (R&D Committee)
4. Work with software vendors to develop interfaces between Systems and advocate for linking mandatory data sets kept by hospitals and EMS Providers (NFIRS) etc. in order to share data bases when selecting the new software vendor. (CARS Committee)
5. Continue to report local and national research findings to System members through CE programs. (EMS Educators)

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6. Areas of study for 2011:
 - Improving patient safety by reducing errors
 - Improving the quality of EMS care and systems
 - Measuring the effectiveness of various methods of providing professional education
 - Measuring the efficacy of vascular access using the EZ-IO driver
 - Measuring the efficacy of using the King LT alternate airway compared to tracheal intubation
 - Studying the difference in patient perception of relief and physiologic outcomes following Fentanyl administration
 - Studying the change in patient long-term outcomes following cardiac arrest using the ResQPod and capnography coupled with good CPR.
 - Studying the impact of therapeutic cooling for patients in cardiac arrest and/or those with spontaneous return of circulation.

LEGISLATION and REGULATION

Impact statement	Issues relating to legislation and its resulting regulations are central to the provision of EMS in the public's behalf. Legislation and regulations affect EMS funding, system designs, research, and EMS personnel credentialing and scope of practice (EMS Agenda for the Future).
Position	The NWC EMSS leadership and Resource Hospital EMS staff will remain actively involved in national, state, county and local EMS planning through participation on Committees, in professional organizations, and through effective communication with elected officials and regulatory agencies. System leadership will routinely monitor and provide comment relative to pending legislation and rulemaking after seeking System member opinions.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Maintain current level of vigilance. Participate in State-wide planning, forums, and processes that review and contribute to legislation and rules that impact the EMS System operation (EMSS staff, chiefs, coordinators). <u>2011 State EMS issues:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <u>Implementing the State EMS Strategic Plan</u>▪ <u>All State EMT exam item bank review/revision in compliance with new Education Standards and AHA updates</u>▪ <u>Improving accuracy of aggregate data based on IDPH adoption of NEMSIS</u>▪ <u>EMS data collection and downloading to EMS Data Systems</u>▪ <u>Adopting the National Education Standards based on the National Scope of Practice Model by December 31, 2012.</u>▪ <u>All paramedic programs gain CoAEMSP accreditation by January 2013.</u>▪ <u>Comprehensive EMS Rule revisions based on the IDPH EMS Strategic plan</u>▪ <u>State planning for Emergency Preparedness</u>▪ <u>Statewide BLS protocol adoption</u>▪ <u>Resubmission of System plans</u>2. Tap into as many information streams as possible, i.e., Ill. Fire Chiefs, Ambulance Associations, Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Illinois Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ICEP), Illinois EMS Forum, National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP), Emergency Nurses Association (ENA), Illinois EMS Coordinators Association (IEMSCA), Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council (MCHC), National Registry of EMTs, National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE), publications, websites etc.3. EMS Administrative Director shall continue to serve as a member of the Illinois EMS Legislative and Planning Committee.4. Keep System members informed and involved through the website when it goes live; memos, alerts, CE, and meeting discussions.5. Maintain communication with elected and appointed officials.6. Continue to work with the IDPH staff to enable regulatory processes and remain compliant with regulations. This may take the form of System-assisted ambulance inspections, assisting with the development of exam question banks/pilot exams, and Lead Instructor curricular materials.

EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Impact statement	<p>“As EMS care continues to evolve and become more sophisticated, the need for high quality education for EMS personnel increases. Education programs must meet the needs of new providers and of seasoned professionals, who have a need to maintain skills and familiarity with advancing technology and the scientific basis of their practice” (EMS Agenda for the Future).</p> <p>Adoption of the National EMS Education Standards, National Scope of Practice Model, the national Education Agenda for the Future, the National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint, the national Continuing Education Agenda for the Future, and the 2003 National Core Content highly impact class content and how EMS education is delivered.</p>
Position	<p>The NWC EMSS Education programs exist to prepare EMS personnel and ECRNs to provide or direct competent, compassionate and patient-centered EMS care. NWC EMSS educational programs will continue to maintain a standard of excellence by promoting and supporting a professional teaching and learning environment as outlined in the EMS Education Agenda for the Future.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Professional ethical standards and adult learning principles shall govern all System educational programs, learning measurement tools/processes, and practice competency validation methods. (All system members) Achieving educational objectives in all domains of learning is fundamental to professional growth and clinical excellence.2. Curriculum development, lesson plans, teaching methods, and assessments for the EMT, paramedic, ECRN, TNS, and CE classes shall continue to reflect best-practice models based on research, the National EMS Education Standards and the National Scope of Practice model.3. All educational programs conducted by the NWC EMSS or by a provider agency within the NWC EMSS shall be submitted for IDPH site code approval in compliance with the EMS rules, IDPH and System policy.4. The Education Committee shall continue to provide recommendations to the Chiefs, Provider EMS Coordinators, and Advisory Board relative to proposed policy changes for CE Program refinements will be introduced with the July 2011 academic year with specific plans set forth for further changes to be implemented in 2012.5. Continue to explore the feasibility of creating distributed learning modules to supplement CE content. These modules shall be created by System educators and posted to the System web-site for individualized access.6. Mentor all educators so they serve as models of excellence in keeping with the 2002 National Guidelines for Educating EMS Instructors. All instructors shall gain and maintain IDPH (National preferred) Lead Instructor certification. Competency as a CE instructor shall be measured through evaluations that meet NAEMSE measurement criteria. Peer IV Provider Educators must meet this requirement prior to recognition.7. Continue to work with System Provider Agencies to pilot programs to incorporate agency specific EMS educators. <p>Implement and further develop the Peer Educator model (1-4) which allows system agencies the flexibility to use in-house educators to supplement in-station education (see attached Peer Educator Policy).</p>

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8. The System will continue to seek root causes of poor understanding and explore methods to enhance personal accountability for practice competency and improved learning outcomes.
9. Continue to work closely with Harper College to submit curricular changes that reflect the new National Education Standards, expand the credit hours awarded for the EMT and paramedic courses, and monitor and maintain the Applied Associate Degree in EMS (First credits awarded 9/03). (EMS Administrative Director and Paramedic Course Coordinators).
10. Continue to work towards accreditation of the Paramedic Training Program. (EMS Administrative Director and Paramedic Course Coordinators)
11. Study the most effective means to orient and measure competency of paramedics seeking practice privileges in the NWC EMSS. Enhance the process of using self-assessment tools to improve knowledge of the System SOPs and policies. Develop a process to use System approved Provider Educators for training of System specific skills and equipment prior to completing the Skill Competency Lab at Northwest Community.
12. Educators and Provider EMS Coordinators shall serve as effective facilitators of the exam exemption program.
13. The System will incorporate components of the IDPH Strategic Plan as it applies to Education, including but not limited to: 1) providing continuing education that meets or exceeds the national core content, 2) providing continuing education that is based on needs identified through clinical performance, and 3) and competency based continuing education, when approved
14. The EMS Administrative Director shall continue to serve as chair of the State of Illinois EMS Education Committee.

For additional background information see Appendix C

PUBLIC EDUCATION / ILLNESS and INJURY PREVENTION

Impact statements Public education, as a component of health promotion, is a responsibility of every healthcare provider and institution. "EMS has not yet begun to realize its potential as an important public educator. It should accept the challenge to explore innovative ways for educating the broadest possible spectrum of society with regard to prevention, EMS access, and appropriate utilization, and bystander care. EMS must also educate the public and those that purchase services as consumers, so they are enabled to make informed EMS-related decisions for their communities" (Patricia J. O'Malley, M.D.).

"In the future, the success of EMS systems will be measured not only by the outcomes of their treatments, but also by the results of their prevention efforts. Its expertise, resources, and positions in the communities and the health care system make EMS an ideal candidate to serve linchpin roles during multi-disciplinary community-wide prevention initiatives. EMS must seize such responsibility and profoundly enhance its positive effects on community health" (Theodore R. Delbridge, M.D., MPH).

Most situations (incidents, scenes, etc) resulting in injury are POORLY MANAGED RISKS and are thus preventable. Let's take the word, "accident" out of our vocabulary. An accident is something that is not preventable and thus relieves us of responsibility. Prevention is the key to diminish all poorly managed risks (IDPH EMS Strategic Plan, 8).

Position: The EMS System will continue to be recognized as a credible and reliable source of public education resources.

- Actions:**
1. Educate EMS provider agencies about the Safe Communities concepts, and identify possible community-based, prevention-oriented partnerships.
 2. Collaborate with community agencies, organizations and health care providers to identify community prevention needs and the potential roles of EMS.
 3. Partner with EMS Agencies and System hospitals to promote wellness and the appropriate use of EMS services. See integration of health services. (Provider EMS Coordinators).
 4. Conduct classes and expand the scope of practice of any paramedic wishing to participate in vaccination programs. (NWC EMSS staff)

PUBLIC ACCESS / COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

Impact statements	<p>The focus of public access is the ability to secure prompt and appropriate EMS care regardless of socioeconomic status, age, or special need. For all those who contact EMS with a perceived requirement for care, the subsequent response and level of care provided must be commensurate with the situation</p> <p>Universal public access legislation will require cellular companies to report the location of cellular callers to emergency centers of public safety agencies. The FCC will require wireless carriers to provide the location of all cell phone callers to 9-1-1 centers.</p>
Position	<p>No financial, technical, legal, social, physical, or age-related barriers to appropriately accessing care via 9-1-1 should exist for those who perceive an emergency. All calls for EMS service should be received by dispatchers with the requisite combination of education, experience, and resources to optimally query the caller, make determination of the most appropriate resources to be mobilized, and implement an effective course of action. All those who legitimately contact an EMS public safety access point (PSAP) with a request for care should receive a level of response commensurate with the situation.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Dispatch centers will ensure appropriate compliance with state statutes and EMS rules related to dispatch centers and emergency medical dispatchers.2. Monitor the progress made by CAD centers in adapting to new technologies to track cell phone users.3. Facilitate emergency medical dispatcher training and certification.4. Activate a standing System Committee composed of EMS Dispatchers and other interested parties to fully implement IDPH rules relative to EMD. Cooperate with current dispatch centers to develop QI indicators and processes.5. Transition to broadband frequencies

CLINICAL CARE

Impact statements EMS provides care to those with perceived emergency needs and, when indicated, provides transportation to, from, and between health care facilities. "Advances in technology and provider education will enable EMS systems to provide increasingly sophisticated clinical care. The menu of state-of-the art interventions available to patients will be limited primarily by outcomes data and community needs" (Robert E. Suter, D.O., MHA).

Hospital bypass issues may be problematic during high census periods.

Position The System is committed to providing safe, competent, compassionate, timely, cost-effective, and evidence-based care. **Clinical excellence is the uncompromisable cornerstone for our existence.**

- Actions**
1. Standing medical orders (SOPs) and practice standards shall continue to be evidence-based, justifiable based on community health care needs, and mutually defined by the Region EMS Medical Directors Committee with input from all provider disciplines.
 2. SOPs shall be revised based on the AHA update to the ECC Guidelines published in October 2010 as well as other national standards and guidelines and evidence-based practice models and shall be rolled out in May 2011.
 3. EMS care shall continue to be subject to ongoing evaluation to determine its impact on patient outcomes.
 4. EMS performance shall be measured by the EMS MD or his designees with the goal of continuous improvement. (PBPI Committees and Hospital EMS Coordinators)
 5. Continue to have all new technologies, products, and therapeutic interventions systematically evaluated by the R&D Committee in terms of their impact on patient outcomes and appropriateness for EMS use (i.e., portable, effective, information-adding, meets community health needs) prior to their initiation/implementation.

2011 priorities

Therapeutic hypothermia trials and implementation

Capnography data collection

Follow evolving literature on the risks of oxygen delivery

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Impact statements	<p>"Finding desperately needed answers to many important questions in EMS is hopeless without the development of new ways to collect, link, and analyze valid, meaningful information. This is the very foundation of the future of EMS!" (Daniel W. Spaite, M.D.).</p> <p>The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 (P.L. 104-191), which amends the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986, places comprehensive requirements on the healthcare industry by imposing sweeping standards for the privacy and security of all electronic health information that can be linked to individuals. It also requires electronic transactions for all billing of Federal beneficiaries and a standardized code set. HIPAA preempts contrary state laws unless the state law is more stringent in protecting patient privacy.</p>
Position:	<p>- The huge growth and reliance on technology in the healthcare industry to facilitate collection, storage, and reporting of patient data has made it imperative for the NWC EMSS to adapt and use those cost-effective tools that incorporate uniform data elements, employ standard definitions, integrate information systems with other healthcare providers and public safety agencies, link multiple source databases, and generate valid, reliable, and accurate data.</p> <p>The System is committed to complying with all Federal and state rules with respect to data collection, storage, security and reporting.</p> <p>Provider agencies and hospitals fully comply with the HIPAA Security Rule relative to EMS PHI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technologic safeguards: Technologically driven solutions that deal with how PHI is stored, maintained, backed up, and retrieved must be incorporated into System practice.• Physical safeguards: All System members will continue to address the security of buildings and facilities where electronic PHI is stored, transmitted, retrieved, etc. Only those with a legitimate need to access PHI can enter the area where PHI is stored or used. System PHI shall be stored in a secured office or computers containing PHI will be kept in areas where the public and other unauthorized individuals cannot access them.• Administrative safeguards: EMS agencies shall maintain policies & procedures, conduct training, and enforce best practice models in the ways System members protect the security of PHI.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continue to use the CARS Committee to ensure that the EMS electronic data entry and reporting software operates as designed and meets customer expectations.2. Ensure that all system members have access to computers running the Image Trend Field Bridge Software for generating a patient care reports.3. Work with partners in Regions 9 & 8 to form a user group that shares patient data for quality improvement purposes, achieves economies of scale for financing of ePCR activities, and drives improvements to the Image Trend software.4. The System will continue to ensure compliance with the HIPAA Privacy Rule (Effective April 14, 2003).5. Complete the go live of the NWC EMSS website

SYSTEM FINANCE

Impact statements "EMS Systems, similar to all public and private organizations, must be financially viable. In an environment of constant economic flux, it is crucial to continuously strive for a solid financial foundation" (EMS Agenda for the Future).

System providers are beginning to experience the impact of managed care with respect to payment plans that are only approved at certain hospitals. Patients are increasingly requesting transport to a facility that accepts their insurer.

National Medicare Fee Schedule

Section 4531(b)(2) of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 added a new section 1834(l) requiring the establishment of a national fee schedule for payment of ambulance services under Medicare part B through negotiated rulemaking. The BBA requires that ambulance services covered under Medicare be paid based on the lower of the actual billed charge or the ambulance fee schedule amount. A national Medicare fee schedule for EMS which stratifies EMS responses into categories based on level of service, each with assigned relative value units to be applied with a geographic modifier to determine reimbursement rates after 4/1/02.

Position The System shall continue to conduct all business in a manner that seeks the most value and achieves the greatest return on human, time, and financial investments. All system members are responsible stewards of resources allocated to EMS and all System members comply with applicable statutes and rules with respect to ambulance replenishing and patient billing.

- Actions**
1. The System shall continue to monitor national developments with respect to ambulance replenishing and restocking in compliance with the Office of Inspector General final rule and ambulance billing in compliance with the EMS Fee Schedule.
 2. System leaders shall continue to participate in financial planning and have opportunity to vote on initiatives that require substantial monetary outlays, i.e., education, computerization, and communication systems.
 3. System members shall continue to contribute equitably to initiatives requiring capital investment.
 4. Subject all EMS patient interventions and student expenses to a cost/benefit analyses. Remove drugs/supplies from the ambulance if benefit/use is unsubstantiated. Examine educational programs and redesign as necessary to achieve cost savings.
 5. Chiefs/Administrators shall continue to approve educational revenue adjustments for the In-Station program.

See Appendix L for background information on the CMS Fee Schedule

HUMAN RESOURCES

Impact statement	"Regardless of how integration with other health care services and increased use of advanced technology changes the picture of EMS, human resources remain our most precious commodity. Without effective <i>care</i> of our human resources, this exercise becomes academic" (John L. Chew).
Position	The NWC EMSS recognizes the stressors that face EMS responders. We respect and will strive to enhance the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of all personnel.
Actions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Work to improve understanding of occupational hazards for EMS workers by compiling an aggregate occupational injury database and develop strategies to minimize them (significant exposures to communicable diseases, EMS-related work injuries, stress, etc). (Chiefs)2. Explore methods to achieve cost savings for EMS agencies working with hospital-based occupational medicine departments.3. Provide information to System members relating to occupational issues, physical and psychological, unique to EMS workers. Ensure that all EMS personnel receive available immunizations against communicable diseases, use appropriate personal protective equipment including latex-free products where necessary, and receive pertinent education relating to stress management.4. Ensure that alterations in expectations of EMS personnel to provide health care services are preceded by adequate preparation.5. A System-wide culture is promoted that rewards individual and organizational contributions, innovation, and commitment to achieving excellence in patient care.6. The importance of health and wellness is highlighted through educational efforts designed to inform EMTs about the dangers of smoking, unrecognized diabetes, hypertension, and obesity, etc and promoting the benefits of exercise, healthy stress outlets, etc.

MEDICAL DIRECTION

Impact statement	"Quality medical direction is an essential process to provide optimal care for EMS patients. It helps to ensure the appropriate delivery of population-based medical care to those with perceived urgent needs" (EMS Agenda for the Future).
Position	<p>The EMS Medical Director, in consultation with Associate Hospital EMS Medical Directors, provides visionary leadership for the System in compliance with System member expectations and Illinois EMS rulemaking.</p> <p>All on-line medical control (OLMC) is provided by qualified physicians and emergency communication registered nurses (ECRNs) with special competency in EMS.</p>
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Philosophical and scientific agreement will be sought between the EMS Medical Director (EMS MD) and Associate Hospital EMS MDs to achieve System-wide implementation of our standards of practice.2. The EMS MD contract shall be renewed to the mutual satisfaction of the physician and NCH.2. Encourage Associate Hospital EMS MD participation in System committees and activities. (EMS MD)3. Sufficient resources for EMS medical direction are appropriated by all System hospitals.4. Appropriate credentials are held and competency demonstrated by all those who provide on-line medical control, i.e., ECRNs, physicians.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Impact statement	"The ability of EMS to optimally meet communities' and individual patient's needs is dependent on evaluation processes that assess and improve the quality of EMS. Continuous evaluation is essential and should pervade all aspects of every EMS system" (Theodore R. Delbridge M.D., MPH).
Position	The system's main reason for existence is to provide quality patient care in the out-of-hospital environment and to meet the expectations of our internal and external customers. Our effectiveness shall be gauged by a continuous and comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of the system including structural, process, and outcome measures while being sensitive to issues of confidentiality.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The PBPI committee continues to provide an opportunity for System members to actively participate in the establishment and modification of System structures and processes to improve prehospital care.2. PBPI Committee members shall continue to determine aspects of care to be studied, define indicators, generate measurement tools, analyze the data in comparison to national benchmarks where available, determine root causes for process disconnects or outcomes less than targets, suggest tactics to improve performance, and construct reports to be published to system members within two months of data collection. See 2011 PBPI Plan.3. There should be 90% or greater System participation in all CQI studies. The EMS MD shall continue to communicate with EMS members who are delinquent in sending a representative to the PBPI Committee meeting and/or submitting data on time.4. Results of data analyses shall be reported as an EMS Dashboard showing System performance/outcomes compared against national benchmarks when existent.5. Recommended action plans shall continue to be presented through CE, to standing System Committees, to System leaders and will be posted on the NWC EMSS web site as soon as it is operational.6. The efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of System structure, personnel performance, processes, and customer satisfaction shall continue to be periodically measured and reported.7. The effectiveness of process improvements will continue to be assessed, analyzed, documented, and reported.8. The System will continue to assess and monitor key competency and practice indicators.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS Pandemics, Terrorism & MCIs

Impact statement

Initial responders to a terrorist attack, mass casualty incident, or public health crisis posed by a pandemic illness may include local, county, and city health agencies, hospital staff, members of the EMS community, and a wide range of response personnel in the public health system. These responders need all the information and protection that can be reasonably afforded. We need a strong and flexible public health infrastructure; integrated planning to dovetail public health, municipal, private, and hospital preparedness, and a unified incident command system.

Key elements of public health preparedness include “regularly exercised plans, timely access to information, clear knowledge of individual and agency roles and responsibilities, reliable communications systems and connectivity between and among responding agencies” (Harvard School of Public Health Center for Public Health Preparedness www.hsph.harvard.edu/hcphp)

The best defense in reducing casualties will be the ability of the public health and healthcare systems, communities, and individuals to prevent, protect against, quickly respond to, mount an appropriate response, and recover from health emergencies that threaten to overwhelm routine capabilities (RAND Corp, 2007).

Local communities and hospitals must be prepared to be relatively self-sufficient for several days to weeks following a major incident.

Position

The NWC EMSS will actively participate in local, regional, and state-wide planning to address mass casualty events involving natural and man-made disasters including those perpetrated by weapons of mass destruction or pandemic disease.

We will support local, regional, and state planning activities addressing the following:

- Incident Command Systems to address mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery operations
- Use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the model for emergency response procedures, protocols, and practice
- Mass dispensing of medications and/or vaccinations in cooperation with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC’s) Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) or the state’s predesignated RSS (receipt, sore and stage) sites.
- Development, analysis, testing, exercising, and revising emergency and contingency plans, including but not limited to, pandemic preparedness, SNS distribution, surge capacity, and continuity of operations requirements.
- Enhanced collaboration with local public health departments
- Education and use of START and JumpSTART triage processes and the use of the State-approved SMART tag system
- Decontamination
- Medical management protocols
- Patient destination protocols which may include treat and release, treat and transport to alternate care facilities, or treat and transport to a hospital
- Interoperability of communications systems
- Coordination with burn centers, trauma centers, hyperbaric facilities, and other specialty centers
- Mental health resources
- Documentation
- Media relations

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Actions

1. Participate in Region IX Emergency Preparedness planning activities.
2. Encourage the appropriate acquisition and asset management of HAZMAT equipment for front-line EMS and public safety personnel and establish procedures for mass decontamination within each community (trailers, tents, pools, public works facilities).
3. Provide on-going training on biological, nuclear, and chemical agents for all EMS personnel, including ED physicians and nurses addressing System SOPs based on local, state, and national disaster guidelines and plans. Update the SOPs as new information becomes available (State plan).
4. Monitor appropriate distribution of chemical attack antidotes for public safety personnel.
5. Work with the local County Health Departments to create practical plans with respect to mass immunizations, drug stockpile distribution, early surveillance, and infectious patient disposition.
6. Encourage police preparedness with respect to PPE; mask fit-testing etc.
7. Explore joint use of bio-detection equipment based on Department of Justice recommendations.
8. Incorporate nontraditional mutual aid organizations such as Private Emergency Response System (PPERS) and Collaborative Healthcare Urgency Group (CHUG) into disaster planning and response (State plan).

References

- Barishansky, R.M. (2010). Do you understand the role of public health? EMS Insider, 37(9), 4-5.
- RAND Corporation. (2007). Ready or not? Protecting the public's health from diseases, disasters, and bioterrorism.
- State of Illinois EMS Strategic Plan (2010). Hospital Preparedness Program, p. 27.

Appendix A: INTEGRATION OF HEALTH SERVICES

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics to achieve this strategic initiative:

- Working closely with other public health care systems.
- Working toward referrals and subsequent follow-up. Relationships should benefit all parties by improving understanding of factors contributing to issues involved.
- Community and health care monitoring, which includes data collection and transmission to appropriate community and health care agencies.
- Integration should benefit patients by enhancing and maintaining the continuum of care.
- Care organizations: public/community health agencies; social services resources; police departments.

IMERT teams: Illinois Medical Emergency Response Teams are being developed by a group of Illinois health providers. They will respond to and assist with emergency medical treatment at mass casualty incidents, including, but not limited to chemical, biological, radiological incidents, when a need is identified. They will coordinate and participate in educational programs throughout Illinois to EMS system participants.

Local emergency planning committees (**LEPCs**) are being established in each of the state's counties under the auspices of Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA). LEPCs are required to (1) have diverse community membership (12 categories), (2) write a chemical emergency response plan (9 elements), (3) publicize the plan through public meetings, (4) exercise the plan annually, (5) update the plan annually, and (6) act as a community repository for information concerning hazardous materials in the area. Our system falls within the Cook County LEPC North.

Appendix B: EMS RESEARCH

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- EMS field providers and managers must learn the importance and principles of conducting EMS-related research.
- Help personnel understand the research that is being conducted and enable them to participate and be supportive.
- Allocate federal and state funds for a major EMS systems research thrust.
- Develop information systems that provide linkages between various public safety services and other health care providers.
- Develop academic institutional commitments to EMS-related research.
- Interpret informed consent rules to allow for the clinical and environmental circumstances inherent in conducting credible EMS research.
- Develop involvement and/or support of EMS research by all those responsible for EMS structure, processes, and/or outcomes.
- Enhance the quality of published EMS research.
- Develop collaborative relationships between EMS systems, medical schools, other academic institutions, and private foundations.

Appendix C: EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Ensure excellence of EMS educational programs.
- Update core content objectives frequently enough to they reflect EMS health care needs.
- Incorporate research, quality improvement, and management learning objectives in higher level EMS education.
- Conduct EMS education with medical direction.
- Seek accreditation for EMS education programs.
- Establish innovative and collaborative relationships between EMS education programs and academic institutions.
- Recognize EMS education as an academic achievement.
- Adopt the principles of the National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint.
- Develop a system of reciprocity of EMS credentials.

Based on the broad concepts of education practice and theory represented in the EMS Agenda for the Future, the National EMS *Education* Agenda for the Future proposes the following outcome points:

- EMS education in the year 2010 develops competence in the areas necessary for EMS providers to serve the health care needs of the population. Educational outcomes for EMS providers are congruent with the expectations of the health and public safety services that provide them. EMS education emphasizes the integration of EMS within the overall health care system. In addition to acute emergency care, all EMS educational programs teach illness and injury prevention, risk modification, the treatment of chronic conditions, as well as community and public health.
- EMS education is of high quality and represents the intersection of the EMS professional and the formal educational system. The content of the education is based on nationally developed National EMS Education Standards. There is significant flexibility to adapt to local needs and develop creative instructional programs. Programs are encouraged to excel beyond minimum educational quality standards. EMS education is based on sound educational principles and is broadly recognized as an achievement worthy of formal academic credit.
- Basic level EMS education is available in a variety of traditional and non-traditional settings. Advanced level EMS education is sponsored by institutions of higher education and most are available for college credit. Multiple entry options exist for advanced level education, including bridging from other occupations, basic EMS levels, and for individuals with no previous medical or EMS experience. All levels of EMS education are available through a variety of distance learning and creative, alternative delivery formats.
- Educational quality is assured through a system of accreditation. This system evaluates programs relative to standards and guidelines developed by the national communities of interest. Entry level competence is assured by a combination of curricula standards, national accreditation, and national standard testing.
- Licensure is based upon the completion of an approved/accredited program and successful completion of the national exam. This enables career mobility, advancement, and facilitates reciprocity and recognition for all levels.
- Interdisciplinary and bridging programs provide avenues for EMS providers to enhance their credentials or transition to other health career roles, and for other health care professionals to acquire EMS field provider credentials. They facilitate adaptation of the work force as community health care needs, and the role of EMS, evolves.
- It clearly describes the goals for improving the education of all current levels of EMS personnel and has the flexibility to meet educational needs in a rapidly changing field.
- It creates a comprehensive plan for a national EMS education system that will ultimately result in improved efficiency in the educational process, enhanced consistency in the quality of EMS education, and greater competency in the entry-level practitioner.
- The EMS Educational Agenda supports and fosters critical thinking, research and service, and provides opportunities for cooperation and strategic linkages between all essential components for the delivery of quality EMS care.

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- The system proposed in the *Educational Agenda* offers a number of benefits, including greater predictability for component development cycles, and a clear and definite method for introducing changes to the system. These provisions clarify the process for accommodating medical advances, technology development, and other needs that affect the scope or content of EMS education while following the attributes of the *EMS Agenda for the Future*.

Paramedic Continuing Education National Guidelines

(The U.S. DOT, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Services and the Health Resources & Human Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, published the Continuing Education National Guidelines)

- Supported by NHTSA, these guidelines replace the 1985 EMT-P and EMT-I Refresher Courses. They are part of a series of courses making up a national EMS training program consistent with the recommendations of the *National EMS Education and Practice Blueprint*, the *EMT and Paramedic Practice Analysis*, and the *EMS Agenda for the Future*.
- Advocates that CE should move toward a quality assurance model that identifies individual and system areas for improvement and incorporates these topics into the CE program.
- A major emphasis of this document is to transition EMS education and continuing education from strictly an hours-based to a competency-based approach. They give rationale for the necessity of recertification/ relicensure including the rapid expansion and perpetually changing nature of medical knowledge and skills and professional accountability. Trends dictate that providers "prove" their ongoing competence.
- The model suggested in this document addresses two primary areas of concern: (1) competence (measure of minimum proficiency of EMS providers' knowledge and skills) and (2) ongoing education which is designed to assure that the EMS provider obtain "new" knowledge and skills as well as maintain prior knowledge and skills. Underlying their model is the assumption that credentialing agencies expand that number of types of mechanisms through which a provider can demonstrate competence.
- They recommend that the assessment process used in relicensure provide a complete picture of the EMS professional's competence in three areas:
 - Actual field performance (assessment of practice outcomes)
 - Assessment of potential to practice: Ability to respond appropriately to a wide range of patient situations including those that are important, new, or infrequently encountered. Local EMS agencies should offer structured education on topics identified through their QI program as an emerging need.
 - Assessment of professional qualities (attitudes and behaviors)
- Mechanisms for competency assurance are specified. *Competency-based education, directly toward the attainment of specific, behaviorally defined objectives requires separate tests of the attainment of each of the competencies.*
 - Needs assessment
 - Assurance of knowledge through a variety of CE and refresher programs
 - Assurance of skill proficiency through field performance evaluation, hospital clinical performance evaluations, skills workshops, and performance examinations
- The document states that EMS systems should ensure that CE helps providers keep up with the rapid changes in emergency care. Local medical directors must verify that personnel are competent in local/regional equipment, policies, and procedures. For every system change, verification of the training and implementation process must be documented.
- The "*Kirkpatrick Model*" is advocated as an evaluation process for the education program
 - Level I: Learner's reactions in post-class questionnaires. Provides immediate feedback to improve future programs.
 - Level II: Evaluate whether learning has occurred through written and practical exams.
 - Level III: Evaluate job performance and application of the education to real life situations.
 - Level IV: Evaluate if education had a positive impact on patient outcomes.

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- The document breaks down the various modules into preparatory, airway management and ventilation, patient assessment, trauma, medical, special considerations, and operations and recommends a minimum number of CE hours per year ranging from a total of 24 to 36 hours.

NWC EMSS-Specific Education Program Objectives

The **EMT course** is conducted in compliance with all relevant guidelines and operates within its budgetary plan. The EMT Course Coordinators serve as resources for BLS CE throughout the system.

Evidence of achievement:

1. EMT students pass the State and/or National Registry examination on the first attempt.
2. The EMT Course meets budget or demonstrates a favorable variance.

The **Paramedic Course** is conducted in compliance with all relevant guidelines and operates within its budgetary plan. The Paramedic Course Coordinator serves as a resource for ALS education in the system.

Evidence of achievement:

1. Paramedic students consistently score in the top 2nd standard deviation on credentialing examinations.
2. The course optimizes readiness to learn by sequencing theory from the known to the unknown; alternates complex with less difficult concepts, and focuses on experiential learning. Integration and application of theory to practice is highlighted through early entry to the clinical units and through an emphasis on psychomotor skill development in lab sessions. All students meet affective objectives.
3. The Paramedic Course meets budget or demonstrates a favorable variance.
4. Preceptor training continues to be held for preceptors.
5. System personnel are mentored as instructors.

The **Continuing Education program** meets contemporary needs of the educators and learners and operates within its budgetary plan. Cognitive competency continues to be measured through valid and reliable post-tests and modular exams.

Evidence of achievement:

1. The CE program operates within the budgetary plan.
2. CE billing is processed quarterly and tracking of accounts receivable is accomplished by the NCH accounting office.
3. Class scheduling mutually accommodates the needs providers and educators.
4. PBPI findings are one of the drivers of CE content.
5. CE educators conduct the classes as designed by Resource Hospital educators and apply principles of adult learning theory when teaching.
6. Exams are blueprinted to educational objectives. Content validity is confirmed by peer review. Exam construct validity is confirmed by the EMS Administrative Director and EMS MD. Exam reliability is measured by item analysis and comparison of scores across all EMS agencies.

The **TNS Program** continues to meet or exceed all IDPH requirements.

The **ECRN Course** continues to meet or exceed all IDPH requirements and emphasizes experiential learning to better prepare nurses to provide on-line medical control.

Appendix D: PUBLIC EDUCATION

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Acknowledge public education as a critical activity for EMS.
- Collaborate with other community resources and agencies to determine public education needs.
- Engage in continuous public education programs.
- Educate the public as consumers.
- Explore new techniques and technologies for implementing public education.
- Evaluate public education initiatives.

ILLNESS and INJURY PREVENTION

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Collaborate with community agencies and health care providers with expertise and interest in illness and injury prevention.
- Support the Safe Communities concept.
- Advocate for legislation that potentially results in injury and illness prevention.
- Develop and maintain a prevention-oriented atmosphere within EMS systems.
- Include the principles of prevention and its role in improving community health as part of the EMS education core content.
- Improve the ability of EMS to document injury and illness circumstances.

Appendix E: EMS ACCESS

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Implement wireless 9-1-1 access. Ensure that all calls to a PSAP, regardless of their origins, are automatically accompanied by unique location-identifying information.
- Develop uniform cellular 9-1-1 services that reliably route calls to the appropriate PSAP.
- Evaluate and employ technologies that attenuate potential barriers to EMS access.
- Enhance the ability of EMS systems to triage calls and provide resource allocation that is tailored to patient's needs.

COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics to achieve this strategic initiative:

- Assess the effectiveness of various personnel and resource attributes for EMS dispatching.
- Receive all calls for EMS using personnel with the requisite combination of education, experience, and resources to optimally query the caller, make determination of the most appropriate resources to be mobilized, and implement an effective course of action.
- Promulgate and update standards for EMS dispatching.
- Develop cooperative ventures between communications centers and health providers to integrate communications processes and enable rapid patient-related information exchange.
- Determine the benefits of real-time patient data transfer.
- Allocate federal, state, and regional funds to further develop and update geographically integrated and functionally based EMS communications networks.
- Facilitate exploration of potential users of advanced communications technology by EMS.
- Collaborate with private interests to effect shared purchasing of communications technology.

Appendix F: CLINICAL CARE

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics to achieve this strategic initiative:

- Commit to a common definition of what constitutes baseline community EMS care.
- Subject EMS clinical care to ongoing evaluation to determine its impact on patient outcomes.
- Employ new care techniques and technology only after shown to be effective.
- Mutually acceptable clinical guidelines regarding patient treatment and transport must be developed.
- Conduct task analyses to determine appropriate staff configurations during secondary patient transfers.
- Eliminate patient transport as a criterion for compensating EMS systems.

Appendix G: INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Adopt uniform data elements and definitions and incorporate them into information systems.
- Develop mechanisms to generate and transmit data that are valid, reliable, and accurate.
- Develop information systems that are able to describe an entire EMS event.
- Implement laws that provide protection from liability for EMS field and medical direction personnel when dealing with unusual situations.

HIPAA calls for

1. standardization of electronic patient health, administrative, and financial data,
2. unique health identifiers for individuals, employers, health plans, and health care providers, and
3. security standards protecting the confidentiality and integrity of "individually identifiable health information", past, present, or future.

Appendix H: SYSTEM FINANCE

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Collaborate with other health care providers and insurers to enhance patient care efficiency.
- Develop proactive financial relationships between EMS, other health care providers, and health care insurers/provider organizations.
- Compensate EMS on the basis of a preparedness-based model, reducing volume-related incentives and realizing the cost of an emergency safety net.
- Commit local, state, and federal attention and funds to continued EMS infrastructure.

Appendix I: HUMAN RESOURCES

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Ensure that alterations in expectations of EMS personnel to provide health care services are preceded by adequate preparation. (System entry etc...)
- Support critical incident stress management programs.

Appendix J: MEDICAL DIRECTION

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Formalize relationships with all EMS systems and medical directors.
- Require appropriate credentials for all those who provide on-line medical direction.
- Encourage Associate hospital physician participation in system activities.

Appendix K: CONTINUOUS QUALITY MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

The National EMS Agenda recommends the following tactics:

- Develop valid models for EMS evaluation.
- Evaluate EMS outcomes for multiple medical conditions.
- Determine EMS cost-effectiveness.
- Incorporate consumer input into the evaluation process.

Issues impacting the NWC EMSS:

- While improved, participation in QI activities has not reflected full System participation, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings to all providers.
- There has been a reluctance to embrace individual EMS agency QI activities based on limitations in hours and misunderstandings related to its purpose.
- Performance in several areas continues to fall below benchmarks

Appendix L: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Ambulance Fee Schedule

The Medicare program pays for transportation services for Medicare beneficiaries when other means of transportation are contraindicated. Ambulance services are divided into categories based on the medically necessary treatment provided during transport.

For ground:

- Basic Life Support (BLS)
- BLS-Emergency
- Advanced Life Support, Level 1 (ALS1)
- ALS1-Emergency
- Advanced Life Support, Level 2 (ALS2)
- Specialty Care Transport (SCT)
- Paramedic ALS Intercept (PI)

For air:

- Fixed wing Air Ambulance (FW)
- Rotary wing Air Ambulance (RW)

The final rule establishes a fee schedule payment system for all EMS services.

- Providers may not bill for individual supplies, equipment or drugs if they wish to have the hospitals exchange supplies/equipment at no cost to the provider agency.