

EMS



Bulletin

Office of Emergency Medical Services,
Virginia Department of Health
Summer 2009

Flu Prevention - What You Can Do

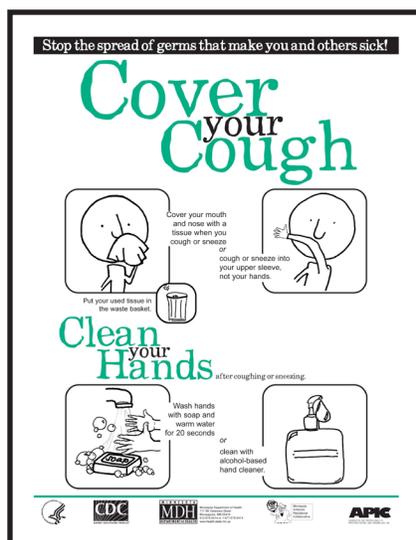
Summer usually means the end of our flu season, but this year novel influenza A (H1N1) has lingered. The CDC estimates that Virginia has likely had over 20 thousand people who have been ill with H1N1, since it was first diagnosed here last spring. There has been nothing typical about the flu season this year, and as we head into fall it is likely that it will be a challenge for health care providers.

With children returning to school, it is very possible that the H1N1 virus will spread rapidly, while the seasonal flu will also be surfacing. Our biggest ally during this time is public education and making sure that you get vaccinated.

Health care providers, including EMS providers, will likely be included in one of the first groups to be able to get the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. It is essential that all providers get the vaccine. Contrary to the urban myth – you cannot get the flu from the vaccine. As a person who will be in contact with the general public and people who may have compromised immune systems – you should get vaccinated.

It is also important to remember that you are a respected member of your communi-

ty, and you can provide education that can help minimize the spread of the flu. While you are out in the community, be sure to remind people to get vaccinated (this includes the seasonal vaccine which is already available). Also, be sure to educate people



on proper coughing etiquette, washing their hands and letting them know to stay home when they are sick.

The CDC has several flu resources on their Web site (www.cdc.gov) that include downloadable fliers, activities and widgets for

your Web pages. These resources are extremely useful for your public education activities.

Be sure to keep up-to-date on H1N1 and other flu activity in Virginia by visiting the Office of EMS Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems and click on the H1N1 link in the news box.

THE KEY TO FLU PREVENTION STARTS WITH YOU!

- ✱ ALWAYS FOLLOW INFECTION CONTROL PROTOCOLS
- ✱ WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY
- ✱ COUGH IN YOUR SLEEVE OR TISSUE (THROW OUT TISSUE AND WASH YOUR HANDS)
- ✱ GET VACCINATED
- ✱ STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK

Grant Enables Agencies to Get ToughBook Computers

By: Amanda Davis, Grants Coordinator

The Office of EMS worked to acquire a grant through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that would support the purchase of Panasonic ToughBook computers for use in the field by EMS agencies.

With the grant from DHS, the Office of EMS was able to award over \$3.9 million to 106 eligible localities throughout Virginia, which allowed for the purchase of 1,069 ToughBook 19 Computers.

OEMS received over \$4.4 million in requests for grants from 114 localities. Because there was not enough funding to allow all localities that applied for the grant to receive funding, OEMS created a criteria to fairly rate the applications.

Those who met the criteria were able to receive the grant.

This grant program will fund the ToughBook computers to the eligible agencies within the locality to access the selected OEMS software, ImageTrend, to electronically submit pre-hospital patient care reports (PPCR).

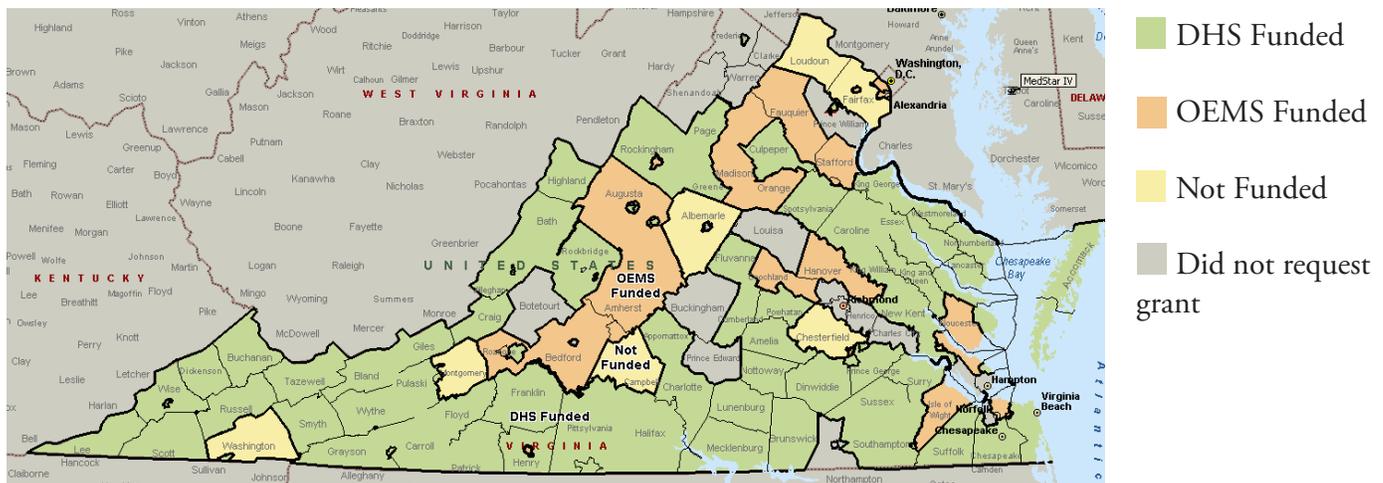
The Office of EMS is working with the selected vendor, ImageTrend, to provide state-wide training and each agency will be notified directly by OEMS regarding the training dates.

Those who were awarded the ToughBooks will receive them with the ImageTrend software already loaded on the

equipment.

The Office of EMS is exploring other grant opportunities to help all agencies get equipped with ToughBooks so they can have an easier transition to the new Web-based PPCR program. Please note that funding is not guaranteed, but options are being researched.

To learn more about this grant and to see the localities that were awarded, please visit the OEMS Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems/grants.



Don't Miss Out!

The deadline for the next RSAF Grant Cycle is September 15th!

The grant application is due by 5:00pm on Sept. 15th via online submissions only. The Consolidated Grant Application Program (CGAP) software can be downloaded or a CD can be requested by accessing <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OEMS/Grants/grants.asp> on the OEMS website. This software is required in order to submit your grant application online and to meet OEMS requirements regarding the RSAF Grant Program. If you have questions or need assistance with your grant application, please contact the Grant Division of OEMS at (804) 864-7600.

Culpeper Volunteer Rescue Squad Overcomes Near Closure and Rebuilds Agency

By: Andrew Daniel, Program Representative & Marian Hunter, PI&E Assistant

Over the past year, Culpeper County Volunteer Rescue Squad has devoted countless hours to meet and surpass the goals that were set for them by the Office of EMS. Their initiation of new programs and standards has revived a sense of leadership, partnership and engagement within the squad.

Technical Assistance programs and support from their OEMS Program Representatives has helped guide them to new resources, information and ideas on how to recruit and retain volunteers and improve leadership and morale.

With a lot of hard work, perseverance and these new changes in place, their volunteer recruitment sky rocketed from 43 to 94 members. They also exceeded the

predetermined emergency call response goal by nearly five percent.

Focused on training initiatives, Culpeper enlisted the help of a contracted EMT instructor to teach certification classes, which were funded by the agency. This new program has been so successful that it's resulted in 12 certified EMT's and seven students already enrolled for next session.

Additionally, Culpeper took an active role in the community by offering free CPR training classes to local residents. They're also working with Tom Williams, Director of Emergency Services for Culpeper County, on an emergency response plan that will be sent to the County Association for involvement among all agencies.

In order to offer the leadership and mentoring skills needed to propel this agency to the next level, Tricia Trenary, Agency President, completed the leadership and management class sponsored by the Virginia Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads (VAVRS) and the Office of EMS. She and Captain Matt Halsey are committed to their agency's continued success and have set the bar high for upward trending.

As of July 8, Culpeper County Volunteer Rescue Squad was awarded a two year license by the Office of EMS. The dedication of this agency's leaders and members has truly helped Culpeper shine and they're commended on a job well done!

HMERT Task Force Supports RAM Health Expedition

By: Frank Cheatham, HMERT Coordinator

The Charlottesville Health and Medical Emergency Response Team (HMERT) Task Force 2 was asked to support the Remote Area Medical (RAM) Health Expedition in Wise County this year. The task force supported the local resources to assist with the event in whatever capacity was needed by them to facilitate the care of the patients.

This year the RAM health care clinic brought in over 2,700 people who were in need of medical care. The RAM allows people who do not have health insurance or cannot afford health care to receive free medical, dental and eye care.

Each year this event grows larger and



Thousands of people received needed health care, like dental care at this year's RAM Health Expedition

larger. The need for the support of the HMERT team is essential. EMS crews on site responded to multiple emergencies ranging from minor incidents to sei-

zures and STEMI patients.

Task Force 2 assisted with and provided infrastructure needs, supported local EMS and assisted in the care of patients throughout the event. The task force deployed with one ALS Ambulance, one 16 foot command trailer, a six wheel gator, the utility pickup truck, and the 24 foot trailer.

This event received national media coverage, and its success can be attributed to all of the volunteers who come each year to support the effort, including the members of Task Force 2.

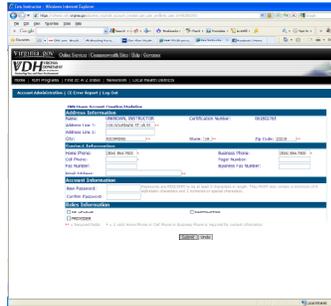
Provider Web Portal to be Launched

By: Chad Blosser, Training QA/QI Coordinator

The Office of EMS has developed and is in the process of launching a new Web interface—the EMS Provider Portal—for EMS Providers across the Commonwealth.

In an effort to reduce our impact on the environment and provide more timely access to data the Office of EMS is moving toward a “paperless office” as quickly as possible.

In late September or early October, the Office is planning the launch of a new EMS Provider Portal. This portal will be a one-stop shop for EMS Providers to interact with the Office in real-time. The Provider Portal will be a se-



curity, interactive location where you can update your address, telephone numbers and e-mail address.

In addition to these features, the EMS Provider Portal will provide you with links to your real-time OEMS CE Report, a new CE Summary Report and if applicable, a link to your Eligibility Let-

ter. Other features and reports will be added as we move forward.

Once the new portal launches, the Office will deactivate the automatic printing of CE Reports and Eligibility Letters for initial testing. So, keep a watch for the launch and get ready to login. You will become responsible to login to the portal in order to access this information. Obviously, those without internet service can still request paper copies; however, with the availability to access the internet at libraries, schools and your agency, this need should diminish significantly.

Stay tuned for more information and an announcement about this new feature on the OEMS Web site!

Rural EMS Roundtable Looks at “Finding Solutions”

By: Carol Morrow, Technical Assistance Coordinator

At the Rural Health Summit in March of this year, the first Rural EMS Roundtable discussion was held. This discussion covered many issues facing EMS in rural areas today. On Oct. 8 – 9, 2009 a second roundtable meeting will be held in Wytheville to continue the discussion and help to identify possible solutions to the top three issues that were identified in the first meeting:

1. EMS Agency Leadership and Management

It is not enough to be elected or appointed an EMS leader – you must be prepared to lead. You must know about setting goals, budgeting, being a supervisor and mentor, know your own limits, triggers and blind spots.

Poor leadership can lead to poor retention of members. Members that do not feel wanted, appreciated, or needed - are not going to stay. For those leaders who

were not born “leaders” – Leadership and Management classes can help.

2. Local government Involvement & Accountability

According to the Code of Virginia 15.2-955 B: “Each locality shall seek to ensure that emergency medical services are maintained throughout the entire locality.”

When local governments choose to be involved in the provision of EMS is because they want to provide prompt, efficient and well managed EMS care to the citizens of their community. They also want to guarantee the continuity of operations and reliability of service.

Local government involvement can have a huge beneficial impact: interoperability of area EMS agencies, accountability, financial stability and standard Polices/ Procedures/ Protocols.

3. Recruitment and Retention of EMS providers

The recruitment and retention of EMS providers is an issue in rural Virginia. The demand for EMS providers is growing, the potential pool of new EMS providers is declining, and there are more demands on people’s lives which leads to less time to volunteer.

In many areas there is a turnover rate of 20 percent of EMS providers every year, which means that in five years the agency is starting over. The question is why? Generational attributes may play a role. Poor leadership is also something attributed to loss of providers.

We need your support and ideas to help find a solution to these challenges. Save the date and plan to be part of the discussion and assist with finding the solutions. Contact Carol Morrow with questions: carol.morrow@vdh.virginia.gov

EMS Planning for a Pandemic Event

By: Winnie Pennington, Emergency Services Planner

How would the average EMS agency respond if suddenly 40% of its employees didn't show up to work? How do we keep patients and responders protected from cross contamination during responses? What happens if a work colleague dies from complications during a pandemic flu outbreak? These are just some of the questions that EMS agencies and providers might be facing during a severe influenza outbreak like a pandemic.

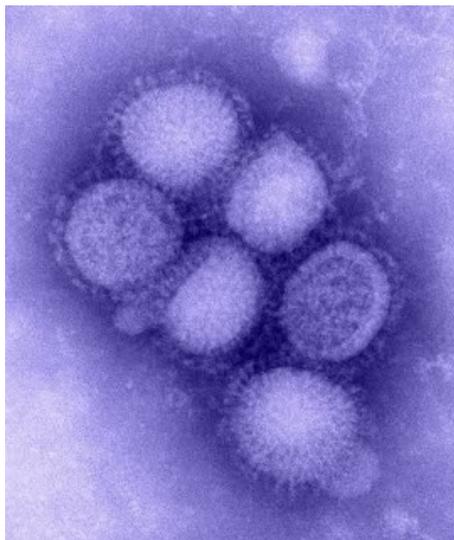
As the Nation's health care "safety net," EMS will be faced with higher demands for service while experiencing problems similar to the rest of the nation – increasing employee absenteeism, disruption of supply chains, and increased rates of illness and death. So we as agencies and individual responders must be ready to respond.

There are three types of influenza viruses: A, B and C. Influenza A and B viruses cause seasonal epidemics of disease almost every winter in the United States. Influenza A viruses can be broken down into sub-types. Over the course of a flu season, different types (A & B) and sub-types of influenza A viruses can circulate and cause illness. In addition, influenza viruses are constantly changing through a process called "antigenic drift" or sometimes "antigenic shift."

Antigenic drift over time produces new virus strains that may not be recognized by the body's immune system. Antigenic shift is an abrupt major change in the influenza A viruses, resulting in new influenza viruses that infect humans – most people have little or no protection against the new virus. This is the nature of the H1N1 virus.

Influenza A viruses are found in many different animals. Wild birds are the pri-

mary natural reservoir; however, pigs can be infected with both human and avian influenza viruses in addition to swine influenza viruses. Because of this it is pos-



sible for the genes of these viruses to mix and create a new virus. Pandemics have occurred intermittently for centuries.

There is much information out there to assist EMS agencies and providers to prepare their organizations for a Pandemic Influenza outbreak. Including information on the following web sites:

- www.ready.gov
- www.pandemicflu.gov
- <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3327pandemic.pdf>
- <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/ems/PandemicInfluenzaGuidelines/>
- <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/ems/PandemicInfluenza>

In trying to consolidate some of this information, below is a list of some of the major planning considerations from these resources to give a starting point at which organizational planners can refer to and begin to enhance their planning efforts.

Local EMS Pandemic Influenza Planning should:

1. Define the role of EMS in preparing for & responding to pandemic influenza
2. Identify leadership consistent with NIMS, including ICS coordinated carefully with local emergency management plans
3. Allow EMS to maintain its response to day-to-day emergencies while addressing the demands of pandemic influenza mitigation
4. Include a continuity of operations (COOP) plan that ensures essential functions and vital services can be performed during an influenza pandemic
5. Have backup plans to augment the EMS workforce
6. Plan for disruptions in availability of equipment, supplies, and services
7. Include effective, reliable interoperable communications systems among EMS, 9-1-1, emergency management, public safety, public health, and health care agencies
8. Define a process for providing just-in-time training for EMS agencies, providers, and medical directors and PSAPs
9. Consider the role EMS providers could serve in "treating and releasing" patients without transporting them to a health care facility
10. Identify strategies to protect the EMS and 9-1-1 workforce and their families during an influenza pandemic

As stated, these points listed above are not exhaustive, but they are a good place to start and should be considered by all EMS agencies when planning for a pandemic event and in agency continuity of operations planning (COOP).

As we head into peak flu season this type of planning is very important to our agencies and personnel.

EMS
BULLETIN
SPECIAL SECTION!
EMS RECRUITMENT &
RETENTION

EMS Retention – Starting Right with New Members

By: Dana Love, Ph.D, State Advisory Board Workforce Development Committee Member

What's the annual turnover in your EMS agency? Is keeping EMS workers a problem for your agency? It is for most departments in Virginia. As recently as March 2009, retaining EMS agency personnel was ranked among the top three challenges facing the system at the 2009 Rural Health Summit in Abingdon, VA.

That's not new news. In November of 2004, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission released a report entitled, "Review of Emergency Medical Services in Virginia" that said "in many areas of the State, recruiting and retaining EMS providers are critical issues. Local agencies are experiencing problems with retaining current EMS providers. The problems are particularly serious for volunteer agencies, and may be putting some volunteer agencies at risk of not being able to provide services on a 24-hour basis, as required by State regulations." This impacts the EMS care available to their community.

Whether unpaid or paid, retaining your

staff is an essential part of management. Consistent management across stations and shifts is vital, and this is where a good EMS retention officer can make a wonderful impact!

What can you do to improve retention in your EMS agency?

Start off right with new members:

1. EMS workers are highly tuned to the need to feel welcomed, needed and respected. Establish a new member orientation program (1st 90 days)...
 - a. Explain the rules, expectations and training
 - b. Give them your contact number
 - c. Make sure that they have their equipment, key, duty schedule – whatever is required to be a member
 - d. Meet them on their 1st duty night, introduce them
 - e. Answer questions
2. Develop a mentoring program – (for 1st year)...
 - a. Mentor can check with new members every week
 - b. Answer questions and provide guid-

- ance
- c. Listen! Be a sounding board
3. Establish a membership feedback program...
 - a. Find out what is bugging members?
 - b. Members can submit suggestions for change
 - c. Take ideas seriously
 - d. Meet with each member individually once a year
 - e. Speak informally with each member monthly

If you accomplish these steps you will be on the way to better retention of your members.

For more information on recruitment and retention, be sure to attend the Keeping the Best! EMS Workforce Retention Program courses.

Retention is everyone's problem. The Office of EMS is willing to help. To learn more about the Keeping The Best! toolkit and workbooks, or to schedule a small-group facilitated class for your EMS agency or community, contact carol.morrow@vdh.virginia.gov.

Virginia Recruitment and Retention Network

By: Dave Tesh, Chesterfield Fire And Rescue Department

The Virginia Recruitment and Retention Networking Group consists of volunteer and career recruiters from emergency services organizations throughout Virginia that meets to exchange information in an effort to improve staffing in our organizations.

The network has been described as a "think tank", and the sharing of ideas is key to its success. The group is a very unstructured collection of professionals that openly share ideas and programs for the enhancement of programs and initiatives

aimed at improving membership in our organizations. Our members agree the networking group has evolved to enrich, support, and energize them.

"I joined the VA R&R Network late in 2005 and left my first meeting feeling rejuvenated. I cannot recall ever attending a local, much less a state wide volunteer/ career EMS and Fire meeting where everyone shared, no strings attached, such fantastic R-R ideas," Bobby Hill, Recruitment-Retention Chair, Virginia Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad

The network assembles every other month for meetings that consist of open discussions, presentations on various recruitment and retention topics and lunch.

Questions? For additional information please contact David Tesh, teshd@chesterfield.gov, 804-748-1629 or, Cris Leonard, jcleonard@co.hanover.va.us, 804-365-4843.

Show me the money for Recruitment/Retention and Leadership Management Projects

By: Carol Morrow, Technical Assistance Coordinator

Don't miss this opportunity to obtain funding for your non-profit EMS agency. Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) grants are a great way to fund your projects – Virginia is one of the few states to have a grant program dedicated to EMS. Projects for recruitment and retention, as well as leadership and management are a high priority for this grant program.

A few tips for a great RSAF grant application:

- Watch the Office of EMS Web site for the RSAF application posting in August
- Complete and submit your RSAF application online
- Don't start your project or spend any money until you receive your RSAF Grant Award Letter – sometime after January 1, 2010.
- Get a written quote on your project and submit with the grant
- Have questions on the grants? Call (804)864-7600 or 800-523-6019 ask for Amanda Davis or Linwood Pulling in the Grants Division
- Have questions specific to recruitment/retention or leadership and management – call (804)864-7600 or 800-523-6019 ask for Carol Morrow

- Work with another agency in your county and get a bigger “bang for the buck”!
- Be complete – a well planned and well written grant is a good start

What type of Recruitment or Retention projects can you request?

1. Recruitment Videos

RSAF can assist with the funding of a video that is both a recruitment and public awareness story of the work that your agency does.



Check out this Forest View Rescue Squad Video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=23huq9s59Uw

2. Media Campaign - Radio, Television, Printed and web based

Use various media sources to let the public know about how important community support is for your EMS agency. Whether your agency needs new members, funding or clerical support – let your community know the great things you are doing.

3. Recruitment Trailer

Virginia Beach EMS received RSAF grants funds for a media equipped recruitment trailer and a LCD system to run recruitment messages and public service announcements.

4. Retention

Keeping the Best classes, media articles about your members that honor and recognize their efforts.



5. Management and Leadership

There are many reasons that members do not stay with an EMS agency – new members weren't welcomed, guided, trained, checked with or poor management resulted in members leaving the agency. Sponsor a management class on leadership and ethics, supervision and being a good leader. Election of agency leaders should not be a popularity contest.

Retention of EMS Providers is a Challenge - Come Learn How You Can Keep The Best!



Classes are being held around the state:

- August 8, Fredericksburg, VA • September 12, Norfolk, VA • October (TBD), Richmond area

To sign up one of the classes please register on-line at: <http://aemer.vaems.org/> or e-mail: carol.morrow@vdh.virginia.gov

New Web site Keeps Providers Apprised of Latest Emergencies

Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, terrorist events and more can occur in Virginia. As the first line of medical care, EMS providers need to stay vigilant on the latest events and possible emergency situations.

The Office of EMS has created a new Web page that will only be available during such an event. This special page will be launched with information, news and updates that are pertinent to EMS agencies, providers and PSAPs.

If a hurricane should hit Virginia this season, the Office will launch the site

as it is heading towards us, and keep it posted with the most current news and information. It will also allow you to know if HMERT task forces are being deployed, if DMAT teams are responding and more.

In the event of a dramatic increase in the number of those infected with H1N1 or if the seasonal flu and H1N1 create serious complications within the health care industry, we will also launch this site with the latest information. This information can include messages from the Commissioner of Health, infection control updates specific to the flu, important

contacts and news.

We suggest that all EMS agencies and PSAPs put this Web address in their favorites. Be sure to sign up to receive news and alerts on the Office home page so that you will get the alert when the Emergency Web page is launched.

Below is the Web address that you will need. www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems/vaem-sevents.

Office of EMS Suspends EMT-Instructor Written Testing Effective June 28, 2009

By: Greg Neiman, BLS Training Coordinator

With the new Education Standards looming on the horizon, effective June 28, 2009, the Office of EMS has temporarily suspended the Written Pretest for the EMT-Instructor Certification in order to conduct the first major re-write since 1995.

Although there have been updates to the Instructor Written Pre-test over the years, the core exam is strictly based on the D.O.T. 1994 EMT-B National Standard Curriculum. The Division of Education Development (DED) is anticipating implementation of the Education Coordinator Certification in 2010 with the new Regulations and use of the Education Standards in programs in 2011. Instructor Candidates obtain 2-year eligibility after successfully passing the written pretest, so Candidates who pass the exam

this year may earn their Instructor Certification around the time the Education Standards are implemented. As such, the DED felt now was the appropriate time to rewrite the exam and begin basing it on the Education Standards and Practical Analysis since new Instructors will need to use the resources in order to teach in the future.

The DED plans to complete the rewrite and information on how to prepare for the exam no later than October 31, 2009, preferably sooner. Please stay tuned as more information becomes available. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Greg Neiman, BLS Training Specialist. (Gregory.Neiman@vdh.virginia.gov)

REGISTRATION FOR
THE 30TH ANNUAL
VIRGINIA EMS
SYMPOSIUM IS
NOW OPEN!

REGISTER TODAY TO GET THE
CLASSES YOU NEED TO
RECERTIFY!

VISIT WWW.VDH.VIRGINIA.GOV/OEMS
TO REGISTER ON-LINE! YOU
CAN ALSO DOWNLOAD A PDF
COPY OF THE SYMPOSIUM
CATALOG TO HELP YOU SELECT
THE CLASSES THAT YOU NEED.

Calendar of Events

September						
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October						
Su	M	T	W	TH	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- ▶▶ September 3 - Trauma System Oversight & Management Committee Meeting 10 a.m.
- ▶▶ September 15 - Rescue Squad Assistance Fund Grant Applications Deadline
- ▶▶ September 16 - EMS Satellite Training
- ▶▶ September 23 - 26 VAVRS Convention in Virginia Beach

Meeting dates are subject to change, visit the OEMS Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems for the latest events and locations.

- ▶▶ October 2 - Symposium Registration Deadline
- ▶▶ October 7 - Professional Development Committee 10 a.m.
- ▶▶ October 8 - Medical Direction Committee 10:30 a.m.; EMS for Children Committee 3 p.m.
- ▶▶ October 12 - Columbus Day (state holiday)
- ▶▶ October 21 - EMS Satellite Training
- ▶▶ October 31 - Halloween



EMS Quick Hitters

Tri-City Regional Fire & EMS School

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs, the Office of EMS, and the Namozine Volunteer Fire and EMS Department, Inc will conduct the 1st Annual Regional Fire and EMS School on August 22-23, 2009 in Petersburg, VA. Registration Fee is \$30 non-refundable. This registration fee covers school cost and the steak/shrimp feast on Saturday night (August 22nd). Download the registration form at the www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems.

It's this weekend, so sign up today!

H1N1 - Keep Up-To-Date

The latest news and information for EMS providers can be found on the OEMS Web site at http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems/news_page/SwineFlu.htm. Save this site in your favorites so you can stay informed.

Virginia EMS Career Finder

This new site allows EMS providers to search for jobs and volunteer opportunities in Virginia. It features a personalized watchlist, search agent, resume posting, and more. Agencies can create accounts, post opportunities and browse resumes. <http://www.vaemsjobs.com/>

Where's Little Gary?

He is hiding in the Bulletin somewhere! If you find him, e-mail the location to: emstechasst@vdh.virginia.gov & you may be our lucky *Where's Little Gary* Winner and get a prize!



Little Gary is ready for a swim!
 Congratulations to Liz Baxter and Christine MacKinnon for finding Little Gary in the Spring Bulletin!

The Virginia Department of Health Office of Emergency Medical Services publishes the EMS Bulletin quarterly. If you would like to receive this publication via e-mail, please send your request to emstechasst@vdh.virginia.gov or sign up to join our e-mail list at www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems.

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