

Newsletter Editor: *John Fisher, MICP*

EMS Chief: *Johnny DeGado*
EMS Medical Director: *Tom Brabson, DO*
Assistant EMS Medical Director: *Brett Greenfield, DO*

CREATING A CULTURE OF PREPAREDNESS

Robert Buzzerd RN,MS,NREMT-P, MICN

Recent global disasters and emergencies always draw focus to a specific event and time. Each of these disasters is a time to reflect and learn. In the last ten years we have seen some of the worst disasters to ever affect our world population.

In 2004 the Boxing Day Tsunami killed more than a quarter million people and left millions more injured and homeless. This disaster affected dozens of countries and was a watershed event in modern disaster planning and response.

A year later hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma devastated the Gulf Coast Region of America and killed hundreds of Americans. These hurricanes also did tens of billions of dollars in damage to Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and Texas.

Last year, I deployed to the Haiti Earthquake with the New Jersey-1 Disaster Medical Assistance Team. I saw firsthand the death, destruction and disruption that a natural disaster can cause. As we treated and assisted the Haitian people I was amazed how resilient these people were to this disaster. I couldn't help but think if placed in a similar circumstance. Could I have survived? How would I have managed without the items I had become dependent on to make life more comfortable?

In the hot tropical heat of a Haitian January you can quickly come to appreciate any shelter from the sun. Water becomes the commodity of life. Many Haitians I treated did not have these most basic essentials in the initial days after the earthquake. Hundreds died from not having basic necessities of food, water, shelter and medical care.

This illustrates my point. What would you do in a disaster or emergency? Could you, your family and your pets survive several days without refrigeration, potable water or shelter? How would you do it?

I pose these questions because they become the basis of creating a plan for mitigating the effects of disasters/emergencies. Sometimes we forget how much prior planning can help to minimize the effects of events. Attempting to plan and execute an evacuation in the troughs of a crisis could be futile and cost you precious time, you might need to get to safety. Now is the time to prepare.

Create your plan.

After a major disaster, emergency response services might not be able to meet the demands of everyone. It makes it essential that each person and each family be able to do for themselves for the first 72 hours of any disaster.

The following steps can help you prepare for any emergency:

- 1) Designate an out-of-area contact person. Try to select someone who is enough away who would not be affected by the same emergency. This person should have the names and contact information of anyone you would want informed of your situation in a disaster. Instruct family members who this contact person is and how to reach him or her. This contact person should have numbers and locations of your loved ones in case you become separated.
- 2) Duplicate important documents and place those copies in a safe place. This could be a safety deposit box or even given to the contact person who lives outside the affected zone. Some of the documents you might want to include: passports, driver's license, Social Security cards, wills, deeds, financial statements, insurance information, marriage license and even a list of medications.
- 3) Inventory your valuables, both in writing and with photographs or video. Keep copies of this information off-site and with your other important documents.
- 4) Make your household/family plan. Make sure you involve everyone in the planning process from children to anyone else who might live in your household. They will need to know what to do in case you're not available or you become separated. Practice this plan at least once a year and improve upon it when you find deficiencies.
- 5) Make your home safe. Make sure your home has working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide monitors. Identify the obstacles that could present problems in the event of a disaster. Flat screen TVs improperly secured to the wall can create other hazards, as can unsecured water heaters and furnaces. Secure heavy bookcases and furniture that could be displaced. Ensure easy egress to and from the home. Also make sure that your home address is easily visible from the street so that emergency responders can find you.
- 6) Probably the most important thing you can do is create a "go bag." A useful go back or disaster supply kit consists of those supplies that you might need in the first 72 hours of a disaster. You should have enough supplies for yourself and your family to take them through this initial period.
- 7) When you're creating your plan make sure you consider household members who might have special needs. These needs could include mobility, health and/or special needs issues. Young children or seniors might need additional assistance to either evacuate or survive the initial disaster.
- 8) And finally, let's not forget our pets. During disasters pets will need care. Plan on 72 hours of their needs as well.

These are basic steps that help get our preparedness mindset going. There are many resources that go into much greater detail and provide lists and other helpful suggestions to accomplishing this project. Don't be intimidated by the process. It can be done over a period of time, but now is the time to start.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has a web site www.ready.gov goes through the steps needed to be prepared in an emergency situation. Everything you need can be found on that website.

Additional web sites include:

www.72hours.org - New Jersey Office of Emergency Management

<http://www.state.nj.us/njoem/plan/kit-plan.html> - "Preparing for Disaster"

Experts give advice on how to prepare disaster plans and emergency kits for you and your family, by Dulce Zamora - www.webmd.com/mental-health/features/preparing-for-disaster

American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org/family/frk/frkit.htm

www.readyatlantic.org

FROM THE CHIEF'S DESK

Greetings!

It would seem this year's relentless storms and snow falls would never end, but as it happens each year they yielded to a wonderful spring. I think each and every one of us must have asked ourselves when it would end at some time or another. It's nice to see a fresh carpet of green outside our windows instead of the ocean of white we thought would never end. At times I know the conditions were extreme and the calls were non-stop but you all responded with grace and poise – a true team of professionals. I know I speak for our senior leaders when I say – THANK YOU!

Our new pre-hospital electronic medical record ePCR went live January 4. Thanks to each of you for your patience and professionalism. As with any new system we had some minor hurdles and with each passing day they grow fewer in number. Special thanks to the entire team at the ePCR help desk: Will Cohen, Sara Totterdale, Linda Horgan, John Sapello and John Bergen. Our AtlantiCare Information Technology group dedicated countless hours toward our success. The entire project was a true testimony to teamwork and collaboration. ePCR also allowed us to take a huge step in a "more green" direction. Our field units have gone nearly 100 percent paperless, which reduces our paper footprint by over 36,500 lbs., or 18.25 tons each year. That's what going green is all about! Our work reinforces what's happening inside the hospital. ARMC, which went paperless January 3, is now using computerized practitioner order entry or CPOE – hospital-wide.

As our plans and projects from last year are coming together we look toward a brighter and more efficient future. Our new radio system is slated to come on-line in the spring. The final phases of the MedCom upgrades and dispatch quality assurance software will follow almost in lockstep with the radio system. In a few short months we'll have entered the new millennium on a number of fronts.

It would be easy to get caught up in all the cutting edge technology and to forget the most powerful tool in our arsenal is our exceptional customer service. Healthcare dollars are becoming more scarce. The communities we serve have a choice. Our partners and patients will decide we are truly their best choice for EMS care based on the quality care and exceptional customer service we provide.

As we evolve, our mirror must take on two faces – "high tech" and "high touch" must be the new mantra for all EMS. We think 51 percent positive attitude and 49 percent technical ability will define the prototype EMS provider of the new decade and well into the future. In short, we should all become a team of professionals that naturally radiates warmth, friendliness, happiness, empathy and kindness – the kind of people it just genuinely feels good to be around all the time.

Enjoy a great spring! --Johnny

NJ EMS TASK FORCE

Debbie Bell

The long-awaited Mass Care Response Unit (MCRU 4) has arrived in the Southern Region finding its home at AtlantiCare EMS. The primary mission of an MCRU is to provide ALS/BLS capabilities to treat 100 patients. The \$60,000.00 allocated to AtlantiCare EMS by the State of New Jersey will allow for the purchase of specified MCRU items. The pick-up truck is in service with a primary mission to tow trailers within the region and in support of AtlantiCare's role with the NJ EMS Task Force.

AtlantiCare EMS is active within the USCG Sector Delaware Bay participating on sub-committees and in some leadership roles, assisting with the Mass Rescue Operations plan update, and competing for and receiving grant awards to improve our response capabilities within the region for our department and as an agency of the NJ EMS Task Force.

In the past few months, the team participated in exercises at the Lincoln Tunnel and in Bayonne. We provided incident management, planning, and staging support for the activation of the NJ/NYC MOU. NJ provided over 50 ambulances from across the state in three operational periods to NYC during a winter storm that placed them behind almost 2000 emergency calls.

In November 2010, we presented a modified version of the NJ EMS Planning Summit at the New Jersey Statewide Conference on EMS in Atlantic City. Favorable feedback included adding a preparedness track in upcoming conferences.

May 4 we will facilitate the Medical Operations Module of the Delaware Bay Mass Rescue Tabletop Exercise at the NJ EPA Conference in Atlantic City. The focus will be the exercising of the Concept of Operations - Cape May Lewes Ferry EMS Response Plan. Registration is open and available through www.njepa.org.

The NJ EMS Task Force, in partnership with the New Jersey County OEM, Coordinators will host New Jersey Homeland Security and Preparedness: A Conference for Emergency Medical Services, March 28 and 29 at the Hyatt Regency, New Brunswick. Registration is open with minimal seats remaining.

Also in March the team will participate in a functional interoperable communications exercise followed by a large full-scale exercise at the New Meadowlands Stadium, Operation REDZONE. We have begun to plan for another federal Operation Eagle exercise that will likely occur in New Jersey in 2012. Expectations are we will see more requests for department and team participation in school drills due to recent changes in the requirements for school drills. Salem County is developing a MCI plan and series of exercises to test the plan. The exercises will likely include NJ EMS Task Force

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2010 EMS HOLIDAY GALA – A NIGHT OF SHINING STARS

Becca Rush

2010 was a banner year for our department. What better way is there to wrap it up than to celebrate with a night of great food, warm laughter, and camaraderie? The Tuckahoe Inn played host to a sold out celebratory group from our department. Chris of E-Max Entertainment provided the entertainment. The comedic spirit of the evening was enriched by the recipients of the inaugural "Johnny" Awards showcasing the special "talents" of nominated staff. The winners of each category are:

- Best Holiday Spirit (Exudes the most holiday cheer) – Becca Rush
- The Grinch Award (Excludes the most holiday cheer) – Eric Winter
- The Baby's Bottom Award (smooth in a crisis) – Mike Smith and Pam Jones
- Brightest Bulb Award (has the best ideas) – Sara Totterdale
- The "Hats Off" Award (always does a great job) – Lou Raniszewski and Steve Gallagher
- The "Spammie" Award (sends the most emails) – John Bergen (It was a landslide)
- The Very Handy Award (always called on to fix anything) – Danny Berglund
- The Nuts about their Job Award (really, really loves his or her job) – Jen Gradia (Was there any doubt?)
- The NASCAR Award (always racing to clock in) – Joe Halpin (Brake fluid – make sure there's a safe stop ahead.)

In the spirit of giving, we made a contribution to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey Southern Branch.

Planning for the 2011 summer picnic is already underway!



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involvement. The Millville Wheels and Wings Airshow will be May 28-29. I am providing planning support for EMS. The estimated attendance and weather expectations will drive outside resource requests.

The EMS planning project for USCG Sector Delaware Bay is in the final stages. The last two phases, off shore large-scale incident and multiple incidents simultaneously within the region are out to for review by the County OEM Coordinators. The Statewide Passenger Rail Planning project is in the final stages with the initial phase out to print.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & SAFETY

Assistant Chief Lou Raniszewski

After a long awaited process, we finally have possession of the Mass Care Response Unit (MCRU). This unit is part of the NJEMS Task Force assets grant that was recently awarded to ARMC through a request for proposal process under a Homeland Security grant. The MCRU is designated to support the southern region of the state during large scale incidents or disasters. It is specialized for mass care operations dealing with approximately 100 patients, but can also support other related operations and pre-planned events. ARMC EMS will maintain the oversight, maintenance and upkeep of the MCRU. However, the unit is also available to us internally to sustain operations during a CODE TRIAGE, internal/external disasters or surge capacity supporting ARMC's Mainland and/or City campuses. Work is currently in progress to stock the unit for service. Additional grant funding is pending to purchase further equipment and supplies. Once the unit becomes ready for service, we'll offer some optional orientation sessions so that our EMS staff is aware of the capabilities and knows what equipment and assets are available.



The ARMC EMS Department is playing an active role with a newly established emergency management steering committee at the hospital. This internal committee is made up of key personnel from various departments/units. It focuses on enhancing current internal plans, establishing new plans for disaster or large scale incident response, and improving emergency preparedness training including incident command and management. We have been instrumental in providing scenario-based ICS training to key personnel on the steering committee.

The Atlantic City International Airport Fire Department is in the process of modifying its emergency preparedness plans, and has eliminated the "alerts" for aircraft incidents (Alert 1, 2 and 3). The fire department has responsibility of the entire FAA and airport complex. Recently, we met with the command staff of the Atlantic City International Airport Fire Department along with Atlantic County Office of Emergency Preparedness to revise our collective EMS response to airport incidents. The known tactical box response assignment will remain for the initial response which includes one ALS unit. Some of the municipal BLS units in this response box have changed. Additionally, two task force assignments have been modified to identify added EMS and specialized support. These now include two additional ARMC ALS units and three ARMC BLS units, along with key ARMC EMS management staff, the NJEMSTF South planner, and MCRU. As we move forward with the updated response, the Airport FD will designate certain assignments/tasks to responding personnel/units. For example, the first due ALS unit might be assigned to triage and the second due ALS/BLS unit might be assigned to setting up and working within a treatment area.

With these expanded roles and responsibilities we will be conducting EMS triage and treatment training to our EMS management and EMS staff this spring. We will tie this into our emergency preparedness initiatives.

As we become more involved in the emergency services within the communities we serve, we'll offer more related training and awareness orientation with the local fire departments on auto extrication and heavy rescue. This will focus on enhancing communication between agencies and incorporating the BLS/ALS roles and responsibilities during these incidents. We continue to work with our MICU partners Virtua and Underwood Memorial Hospital in developing a comprehensive ALS mutual aid response and operations plans.

The AtlantiCare Employee Health Safety and Security Committee is committed to injury prevention for 2011, which EMS is part of. The members of EMS Safety and Wellness Team are working hard on employee safety goals as well. We're also brainstorming how we can improve the way we care for bariatric patients. We're looking at everything from resources to safe patient handling, equipment, ergonomics, etc. We've recently reached out to some of our EMS partners throughout the state and nationally to learn best practices for care of bariatric patients both from inter-facility and an emergency response point of view. Larry Pratt will share further information on this topic from the team's standpoint as we gather further data.

Please remember to don the safety vests when working on the roadways and highways. And as always, remember, be safe and maintain situational awareness!

--Johnny

SOPHOMORE YEAR FOR ATLANTICARE AT THE BORGATA

Bill Warren & Sherri Langsdorf

The beginning of 2011 represents the beginning of year number two for AtlantiCare at the Borgata Hotel Casino and Space. The Medical Unit, or Squad 13 as we are known in the EMS Department, closed out 2010 by seeing a total of 7,406 patients, which included Borgata staff and guests. This achievement would not have been possible without the dedicated team of EMTs and practitioners who are in our unit.

2011 has already brought host of activity and improvements to the Medical Unit. AtlantiCare IT has been busy completing our connection to the rest of the AtlantiCare IT network, installing updated computer equipment, training the entire staff in the use of eClinical, and bringing us online with Kronos. New AtlantiCare signage has also been installed by the Borgata Facilities Department, making our office much more noticeable. Additionally, we have expanded the services for our primary care patients to include the providing ECGs and drawing labs on site. Finally, we have increased our provider staff to include Dr. Ruben Ash, MD; and Nurse Practitioner Dawn Gaddon, APN-C, in an effort to eventually increase our scheduled provider hours, as well as on-call provider coverage.

Even before Presidents Day Weekend, what we call the unofficial start of the "tourist season" in Atlantic City, we began planning for several major events at the Borgata. They include Janet Jackson in concert in late March, Yanni and Ricky Martin in April. Weezer will be kicking-off the Memorial Day Weekend in May, and of course the Fourth of July weekend is always a huge draw to the city.

We are all looking forward to another exciting year at the Borgata. Another year of growth, another year of challenges, and another year of taking the visitors and staff of the Borgata "well into the future."

TRAUMA SYMPOSIUM 2011

The Harrah's Regional Trauma Center at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center will host its 13th Annual Trauma Symposium, May 16-18, 2011 at Caesars Atlantic City. The symposium will address the latest advances and topics in trauma, critical care and emergency medicine, while emphasizing the importance of quality patient care. Speakers will include national and regional experts. This educational opportunity offers continuing education credits and networking opportunities for professional healthcare providers who contribute to the interdisciplinary care of the injured patient, including physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants, physical therapists, pre-hospital advanced life support personnel, respiratory therapists and allied healthcare professionals.

Our own Thomas Brabson, DO, MBA, FACOEP, FACEP vice chairman, Emergency Services and medical director, Emergency Medical Services AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center will present "ECC Changes – AHA Updates." Brabson is also president of the American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians.

Accreditation

Physician

The AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center is accredited by the Medical Society of New Jersey to provide continuing medical education for physicians. The AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center designates this educational activity for a maximum of 18 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ for May 16-18, 2011. Physicians should only claim credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Nursing

18 NJSNA Nursing contact hours will be provided for May 16-18, 2011. AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center Department of Nursing Practice and Education is an approved provider of continuing nursing education by the New Jersey State Nurses Association, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation. P64-11/09-12.

Respiratory

18 continuing education credits are pending American Association for Respiratory Care approval for May 16-18, 2011.

Pre-Hospital

CONGRATULATIONS

Chris and Colleen Contino on the birth of second daughter, Gianna Marie Contino, born 1/11/2011 at 5:35 p.m. 7lbs., 9 oz.

American Red Cross honors **Larry Pratt** for going beyond the call of duty to benefit the community, awarding Larry a 'Public Safety Award.'

Ryan and Candy Heggan on the birth of daughter, Piper Heggan

Pamala Jones and Dustin Widas on promotions to Medcom Battalion commanders

Dustin Widas started in EMS following the 2001 terrorist attacks and after coming home from time in the Army (active duty). He attended the Gloucester County Fire Academy, Gloucester County College, in 2002. Dustin began EMS in Deptford Township in 2002, having worked in various EMS projects over the course of time, including Exceptional EMS where he served as EMS crew chief. He attributes the experienced EMTs and paramedics for teaching him the skills and sharing their knowledge which made him want to continue in the EMS field. Dustin began college in the pursuit of a nursing degree, and started working in ARMC's Emergency Center. In 2007, the Army National Guard activated him to train the mobilizing brigade in preparation for a deployment to Iraq. In 2008, he was deployed to Iraq and operated as part of an Operational Security Team for the Strategic Counter-Intelligence Directorate. Upon returning to the United States, Dustin returned to EMS continuing on to becoming a dispatcher in November 2009.

Pamala Jones, of Tuckahoe, New Jersey, Ocean City High School graduate, attributes her start in EMS to fellow Upper Twp EMT and coworker, **Jay Potter**. Prior to becoming a dispatcher/battalion commander with AtlantiCare, Pam was a volunteer EMT with Upper Township Rescue; she dispatched for Linwood and Ocean City Police departments, and she worked in a family business, **Surran's Nursery**. Pam loves spending time with her family. She and husband, Mike Jones, have two boys, James, 12, and Anthony, 10. She has volunteered in the Upper Township School System since 2004. She is events coordinator for Upper Township Lacrosse. Her mottos: Go Steelers! Go Yankees!

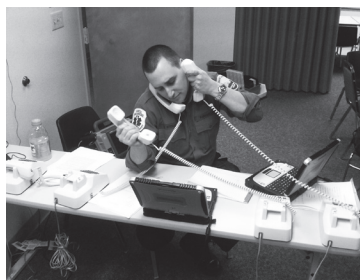


New Jersey EMS: A certificate will be issued upon completion of the course. Credits will be given to each participant through his or her EMS coordinator.

Pennsylvania EMS: Continuing education has been applied for through MidAtlantic MedEvac and is pending PA Department of Health/EMS approval for May 16-18, 2011.

All other out-of-state EMS: Contact your state's EMS office for pre-approval of credits and information about CEUs.

Check out additional speakers and the AtlantiCare employee discount at www.atlanticare.org/symposium



"ePCR MADNESS!!!"
Pictured: Frank Intessimoni

EMS RUBBER DUCKY'S FOR SALE!

EMS Rubber Ducky's For Sale!

"Rubber Ducky" makes a cute gift or memento. Ducky is made of heavy hollowed plastic, with a uniform hand painted with waterproof acrylics. Ducky is wearing a white shirt and black belt. A full color American flag is painted on the right sleeve, a blue Star of Life is on the left and an EMS badge is on the left breast pocket. On the belt hangs a black portable radio. A gray clipboard is in the right wing and an orange and black trauma bag in the left, scissors and gloves hang out. The blue and white lettered EMS cap keeps Ducky focused on the assignment.

The bottom is weighted for a paperweight or to stay right-side-up in the tub or pool. As there is no hole in the bottom it won't fill with water and sink!

Ducky stands a proud 3.75"H x 3"W x 3.25"D, and can be purchased for \$5 each at the EMS office. Sales benefit the EMS Department seasonal and holiday gatherings.

