



On the Banks of the Allegheny

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November 15, 2011

Joseph W. Schmider, Director
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services
Department of Health
Room 606 Health and Welfare Building
625 Forster Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0701

Dear Sir:

Please accept the following comments regarding the proposed rulemaking for the Emergency Medical Services System Act published in the PA Bulletin on October 29, 2011.

These comments are provided in accordance with the regulatory review section of the proposed rule making, and address the sections indicated.

Comments

1. Chapter 1027.1.b.3 and 1027.5.3

- **Providing EMS Services 24/7**

The requirement for providing EMS Services 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week should be clarified by adding a definition with criteria that can be used to determine compliance. Without criteria that includes a minimum response time, the requirement for 24/7 EMS Service provision has no impact on the system, and compliance cannot be determined.

If it is the intent to require designation of staff to be available for 24/7 response, it should be more clearly stated.

- **County Level or Broader Level Response Plans**

Providing EMS Agencies relief from a defined 24/7 service provision requirement through participation in a County-Level Plan is a good idea because it encourages cooperative partnerships; however, the various Municipal Codes as amended by Act 7, Act 8, Act 9 and Act 31 of 2008 clearly make the municipality responsible for ensuring Fire and EMS are provided within the municipality to the extent determined by the municipality. Therefore, the proposed rule making should include provisions which require approval of the specified plans by affected municipalities, as well as the Department. This is especially critical if a municipality is expected to contribute resources to respond into other municipalities, since municipalities may only provide services to other municipalities by agreement.

Proposed rule making should also specify that approved plans provide for 24/7 EMS in all areas covered by the plan.

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2. Chapter 1027.3.g and 1027.3.h

- Ability to Reserve Resources

As written, the proposed rule requires a municipality to respond municipal resources to serve surrounding areas without agreement between municipalities specifying the terms / conditions for provision of those services. This amounts to one municipality being forced to subsidize another in meeting its responsibility for provision of EMS under the various Municipal Codes. It undermines the ability of the serving municipality to manage costs, and maintain desired service levels within its borders. This type of subsidy goes beyond normal Mutual Aid.

The rule should be modified to permit municipal-based EMS Agencies to reserve resources for response within its community unless otherwise agreed to by the municipality and approved by the Department. This would facilitate development of fair, equitable partnerships between municipalities instead of forcing delivery of service to one municipality at the sole expense of another without required inter-municipal service agreements.

- PSAP Prescribing Time for Required Staff to be Enroute

The various Municipal Codes designate the municipality as responsible to provide EMS within the municipality, and to determine the extent, therefore; the municipality in which the service is being provided should prescribe the time for the required staff to be enroute, not the PSAP.

- EMS Agency Dispatch Center

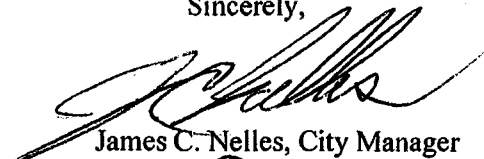
Municipalities have spent and continue to spend much time / resources to develop and maintain enhanced 911 systems. The benefits of a consolidated emergency number / system are well documented.

Permitting an EMS Agency to fragment a consolidated enhanced 911 system by establishing an alternative number and encouraging residents to call the number in emergencies is completely contrary to efficient emergency medical service delivery and a big step backwards.

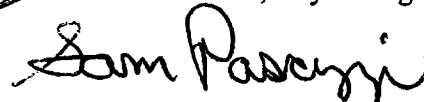
While an alternative to 911 should be encouraged for non-emergency services, nothing other than 911 should be promoted or advertized for emergencies.

Emergency calls should be received / dispatched via an enhanced 911 system and the proposed rule making should support this, not undermine it.

Sincerely,



James C. Nelles, City Manager



Sam Pascuzzi, Fire Chief
723-2950