

RESPONSE

Time



"Your Voice for EMS in North Dakota"
Volume 41 □ Issue 3 □ Summer 2019

***what should
we highlight on cover?***

INSIDE:





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RESPONSE TIME Submission Policy

The ND EMS Association is pleased to accept submissions for Response Time. Submissions should be reasonable in length due to space considerations. In order to ensure the quality of our publication, editing of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and content may occur. Articles, photos, and advertising should be submitted in electronic form.

To submit, please email NDEMSEA at:
ndemsa.office@ndemsa.org

The deadline for the fall issue is
November 1st, 2019

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The ND EMS Association

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HAPPY FALL TO ALL

By Cheryl Flick, Vice-President, North Dakota EMS Association

Fall is right around the corner, so that means harvest for some, back to school for others and cooler weather.

I was asked by a friend why I became involved in NDEMSEA. For me, it was an easy answer. I would get frustrated when things would happen in the state and my small service wouldn't know about it. I was told by then President, Dale Severson, if I didn't like it, run for a board position and help make changes. So I took his advice and ran for the NDEMSEA Board of Directors.

The elections will be coming up again and I know there will be some positions that need to be filled. Please consider running and help keep moving this organization forward. Don't have time to be on the board? Did you know we are always looking for people to help with different projects and you don't have to be on the board to help with different projects?! There are so many talented people among our members that I feel if we reach out and connect, we can only make things better for all. Are you a person that likes to organize, the conference committee is looking for help. Are you a Facebook, Twitter, Social media expert? We can use a person to help in that area. Do you love to research and

write? Perhaps the Publication Committee would be a good fit for you. Let Corrie at the NDEMSEA Office know where you would like to help and she will get you connected with the chairman of that committee. Corrie can be reached at ndemsa.office@ndemsa.org 701-221-0567.

I wish you all a safe and prosperous fall. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me and thank you for your continued support of NDEMSEA.

Cheryl Flick

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MEMORIAL GOLF SCRAMBLE

By Mark Haugen, ND EMS Foundation Board Member



Dale Severson Memorial Golf Scramble was held on Saturday, June 1. Fun was had by all at the first ever Dale Severson Memorial Golf Scramble. The event was held on June 1 at the Cooperstown Country Club. Fifteen teams competed in an 18-hole, best ball scramble. The teams included two from the Dale Severson family and individual teams from Severson, Wogsland, and Liebl Attorneys, Cooperstown Ambulance Service, Garrison-Max Ambulance Service, Northwood Ambulance Service, F-M Ambulance Service, Dale's Neighbors, Rugby EMS, Cooperstown Medical Center & Griggs County Care Center, MLGC, Dirt Pro, Brent Pescion, Joel Rall, and the Fessenden Country Club.

After the completion of the competition, we took time to remember Dale's dedication, service, and accomplishments as President of NDEMSA, as a father, and as a State Legislator. Several reminisced of their favorite Dale story, including a beautiful remembrance given by the Severson family.

The team winners of the golf scramble:

- 1st Place: Northwood Ambulance
- 2nd Place: Joel Rall Team
- 3rd Place: Dirt Pro Team

The individual winners:

- Longest Drive: Tom Engen
- Longest Putt: Tim Martin
- Shortest Drive: Susan Price

Thank you to all of our sponsors who helped make this event successful.

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- Hometown Service Center
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A special thank you goes out the NDEMS Foundation Directors for their hard work in planning and implementing this event, Pat Tracy, President, Jeri Warrenburg, Tammy Roerich, Dustin Bertsch, and Mark Haugen. We also thank Cheryl Flick, Vice-President, NDEMSA, for her help with this event.

Mark your calendar for June 6, 2020 for the 2nd Annual Dale Severson Memorial Golf Scramble at the Fessenden Country Club.

*Sincerely,
Mark Haugen*





NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

By Ron Lawler, Education Coordinator, North Dakota EMS Association

I had started out writing about how I dislike the phrase “It’s refresher season again!” There are several reasons for this and I would love to sit down and chat with anyone about them and how that phrase contradicts the NREMT’s goal of “continued competency.” However, I just attended the National Association of EMS Educators’ Symposium in Fort Worth, Tx. and I think this space would be a great place to share some of the things I learned.

Dr. George Hatch of the Committee on Accreditation for the EMS Professions (CoAEMSP) for the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), presented some information about the number of paramedic programs in the country that are now accredited (652). He also related that 11 applications to start the accreditation process were rejected last year. This is great news as it shows that the CoAEMSP is taking their mandate seriously and that it isn’t just a rubber stamp. Dr. Hatch then stated that the NREMT is asking how requiring accreditation for AEMT programs would affect the CoAEMSP. This could have a significant effect on who would be able to teach AEMT in the future. The NREMT also mentioned this and it is likely to happen after 2025.

The new Executive Director of the NREMT, William Seifarth, presented several items of note:

- He actually had data that they are testing and recertifying more EMS providers than ever before. This may be due to more states requiring the NREMT rather than a surge in new EMS providers or even to the change that more providers are working in non-traditional roles in industry and hospitals.
- The NREMT will be changing some IT infrastructure to keep up with changing web software requirements. So their page may look different, again.

NAEMSE is working with NHTSA to revise the National EMS Education Standards and Instructional Guidelines. Possible changes include additional depth in pharmacology, public health, and wellness of EMS providers.

- They just completed a practice analysis and noted that altered mental status is a large number of EMS calls but they aren’t really tested. So that topic will likely be added to initial exams and strengthened in the recertification requirements.

- The IT changes will also allow “technology enhanced” questions on the exams. Adding things like photos, dynamic ECG strips, video scenarios, drug dose charts for ALS exams, drag and drop questions, and even “talking heads” to the possible question types.

- The AEMT and paramedic practical exams are also under review. Most likely they will remove any isolated skills (like IV or trauma assessment) from the exam and move to all scenarios, or even an “oral board” format. This is just starting to be examined, so watch for changes.

- For all of us, the recertification page on the NREMT website is scheduled to be updated. If they can get it done, it will change by October 1. If not done by then, they will wait until after April 1. The biggest change will be that the large number of topics will be shrunk down to just the five main categories. HOWEVER, you still have to take all the topics. The benefit is that you won’t have to assign every hour to each of the sub-categories. You can just assign the medical classes you take to the medical category and so on. But, if you get audited, they will ask for (or if you upload the certificates, look for) each and every required topic hour of NCCR. All classes you may have entered will be automatically migrated for you on Oct 1. I would suggest you double check that.



- In that vein, Mark Terry, the recertification director, is starting a new project to produce a "Continued Competence Agenda for the Future." This will explore other ways to recertify such as: recert by exam (already available but strengthened), individual or agency level recert prescriptions based on call volume/types and QI, and encouraging ongoing education rather than 1 refresher in February of every other year (which is what I really wanted to talk about and agree with completely).
- The NREMT Board has eliminated the minimum age requirement to certify in favor of letting the individual states decide who is mature enough to take the exams/become licensed.
- They are also discussing changing how scores are presented to students who have failed the computer exam. No more "below, near, above passing" in each category, but possibly a numerical score of how close you were to passing overall.

NAEMSE is working with NHTSA to revise the National EMS Education Standards and Instructional Guidelines. Possible changes include additional depth in pharmacology, public health, and wellness of EMS providers. There will be a public comment period on the documents starting on 8/16/2019, with a webinar tentatively scheduled for 8/22/2019 to go through the changes. Watch for the email or messaging about that.

Lots of great classes at the Symposium for educators and some great research presented. As a new member of the NAEMSE Board, I would encourage you to attend next year in Pittsburgh for the 25th anniversary!

Ron Lawler

NDEMSEA
Education Representative

ANNOUNCING NEW COORDINATOR

*By Christopher Price, MPA, NRP, Director/
Division of Emergency Medical Systems*

North Dakota's Emergency Medical Services for Children (NDEMSC) program is currently in its 14th year of funding. As of June 2019, the program has a new coordinator, Sam Harrison, who is looking forward to bringing together her EMS and Public Health backgrounds in this new role.

One current focus area of NDEMSC is to establish Pediatric Emergency Care Coordinators (PECCs) at every EMS agency in the state. Pediatric patients are, for many agencies in our state, rarely encountered, and it is important to maintain knowledge and skills related to this special population of patients in any way that we can. A PECC at each agency or overseeing multiple agencies would ensure that there is someone invested in continuing education, training and simulation, and reviewing of actual pediatric calls that the agency has run.

For community endeavors, NDEMSC would like to work with partners on anything about safety and injury prevention for children and teens, including safe sleep, auto-pedestrian safety/awareness, and mental health first aid for youth. If you are planning a community safety or family day and would like to collaborate with NDEMSC, please contact Sam Harrison (sharrison@nd.gov, 701-328-2953).

Christopher Price

Director, Division of Emergency Medical Systems

2019 EMS MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

Andrew Berkey, NRP, Jamestown Area Ambulance Operations Manager

The 2019 EMS Management Conference in Bismarck served as a great reminder that effective leaders are needed now more than ever, as EMS faces growing challenges and rapidly changing conditions almost daily. The EMS Management Conference brought leaders together from across the state to network amongst each other and to strengthen our leadership skills to bring back to our services. Being a newer manager myself, I am always eager to learn new things, improve my ability to perform in my role, and to bring new and progressive ideas back to my own service for implementation. Not only did the conference bring new material for me to learn, it brought experienced leaders together to share their knowledge as well.

The opening panel allowed for all the leaders and organizers of the conference to speak about the challenges EMS is facing and to identify the areas that need our immediate attention. We talked about the political, social, and economic problems facing the industry today, which is so important for a newer leader like myself to understand. Most people do not join EMS hoping to one day sit in a room and talk about EMS politics or financial challenges—it just is not on the EMS bucket list of things to cross off in someone’s career—but it needs to happen. It is essential that all leaders understand the reality of where EMS is and what we need

to accomplish to move where we want to be. This was one of the most beneficial conversations I have heard since becoming an EMS manager in 2018.

The other presenters did a fantastic job at the conference. The topics covered a wide range of areas to improve a service from finances and budgeting, incident investigation, documentation, funding sources, managing employee conflict, and EMS training. Thankfully I had two other people from Jamestown Ambulance with me so that we could attend all sessions and bring back great ideas. The incident investigation presentation was amazing. It showed me how much better I can prepare for when an incident unfolds within my service and the detailed and coordinated actions, I can take to ensure the best possible outcomes. I brought back a lot of ideas from that presentation!

Even with all the great topics that were discussed and the resources and tools we left with; I feel the greatest achievement of this conference was the conversations that it generated amongst the EMS leaders across the state. There are many challenges facing us in the coming months and years and it is going to require discipline, ownership, accountability, and productive action to overcome them, and the most effective way we get that done is together.



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Call for Presenters

The North Dakota EMS Association's Conference Committee is accepting Proposals to Present at the 45th North Dakota EMS Annual Conference and Tradeshow. The 2020 Annual Conference will be held on April 2-4, 2020 in Bismarck, North Dakota at the Ramkota Hotel and Bismarck Event Center.

Proposed presentations can be for general, concurrent, bonus or pre-conference sessions. However, it is important to note that the committee may request that the presentation be reclassified after reviewing it. The lengths of each session are listed below.

GENERAL SESSIONS ARE BETWEEN 60 AND 90 MINUTES

CONCURRENT SESSIONS ARE 60 MINUTES

LUNCH BONUS SESSIONS ARE 45 MINUTES

NIGHT BONUS SESSIONS ARE 90 MINUTES

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS ARE 8 HOURS, 4 HOURS AND 2 HOURS

Submitting a Proposal to Present

If you are interested in being considered to present at the 2020 North Dakota EMS Annual Conference and Tradeshow, you must have your materials submitted by September 4, 2019. All proposals must include the following:

Email ndemsa.office@ndemsa.org the list of topics and descriptions along with the NCCR category.

Presenter's Resume

Short Biography of the Presenter

A high resolution, publicity photo (if selected, this photo will be used on our website and in the Conference Program Book).

Honorarium Amount must be included.

Note: You will need to be able to present multiple days for a minimum of 6 times

All proposals will be reviewed by NDEMSEA's Conference Committee and the committee will make all final decisions regarding presenters. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.



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THE SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 20-22ND

The SW conference in Medora is being held September 20-22nd. Once again, the SW Board of Directors and the North Dakota Safety Council **are working** diligently to finalize the schedule.

Each year, the Medora Convention Center is gracious enough to host the SW conference at no cost and AmeriCnn's hospitality keeps us coming back. The SW Conference is a one of a kind experience. For those who haven't attended, it is a great way to get CEU's, network, and have a wonderful mini vacation.

The NDEMSA is on its third year following a set pattern of NCCR hours offered at each conference. This pattern will allow members to plan their two-year training a little easier. The SW and the NE will have the opposite of NW and SE.

Southwest Conference Schedule

Friday, September 20

12:30-1:00pm Registration

1:00-5:00pm **SIMULATION CONCURRENTLY WITH EDUCATION:**
(space limited to 40 students) - POST 4

PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCIES- NCCR Psychiatric Emergencies 1
Lindsey **Schaff**, Bowman Ambulance

SIDS/PEDIATRIC CARDIAC ARREST- NCCR Psychiatric
Emergencies 1
Kelli Just, Community Ambulance of **Lamoure**

Saturday, September 21

7:00am-7:50am Registration

7:50-8:00am Welcome & Announcements

8:00-9:50am **HAZMAT TABLETOP EXERCISE-** LCCR 2, POST 2

Hess Corporation & Jay Skarphol,
North Dakota Safety Council

8:00-8:50am **ADDING VALUE TO EMS-** LCCR 1
Kelli Just, Community Ambulance of **Lamoure**
& Adam Parker, Sanford AirMed

9:00-9:50am **FIELD TRIAGE & TRAUMA TRIAGE-** NCCR Psychiatric
Emergencies 1
Daniel Eil, SHEMA Bismarck

STROKE- NCCR Stroke 1, POST 1
Kayla Shaw, SHEMA Fargo

10:00-10:50am **PEDIATRIC CARDIAC ARREST-**
NCCR Pediatric Cardiac Arrest 1, POST 1
Lindsey **Schaff**, Bowman Ambulance

INCIDENT INVESTIGATION- ICCR 1
Don Moseman, North Dakota Safety Council

11:00-11:50am **FLUID RESUSCITATION-**
NCCR Fluid Resuscitation 1
Dave Wallace, Dickinson Area Ambulance

CONFINED SPACE & LOCKOUT TAGOUT AWARENESS-
ICCR 1, POST 1
Hess Corporation & Jay Skarphol, NDSC

12:00-1:00pm Lunch & Vendor Networking

12:00-12:45pm Service Leader Meeting

1:00-2:50pm **SELF PROTECTION TECHNIQUES FOR RESPONDERS-**
LCCR 2, POST 2
Don Moseman, North Dakota Safety Council

1:00-1:50pm **PAIN MANAGEMENT-** LCCR 2, POST 2
Dave Wallace, Dickinson Area Ambulance

2:00-2:50pm **IMMUNOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES-** NCCR
Immunological Emergencies 1, POST 1
Daniel Eil, SHEMA Bismarck

ALS Topic: **PHARMACOLOGY-** LCCR 1
Tom Dobrzynski, SHEMA Bismarck

3:00-3:50pm **AMBULANCE SAFETY-** NCCR Ambulance Safety 1
Jeff Haugen, North Central Vehicle Sales

4:00-4:50pm **CULTURE OF SAFETY/ROLE OF RESEARCH-**
NCCR Culture of Safety 0.5 Role of Research 0.5
Jeff Haugen, North Central Vehicle Sales

4:50-5:00pm Wrap Up, Announcements & Door Prizes

Sunday, September 22

7:00-7:50am Registration

7:50-8:00am Welcome & Announcements

8:00-8:50am **ENDOCRINE EMERGENCIES-**

NCCR Endocrine 1, POST 1

Misty Peck, Dickinson Area Ambulance

9:00-9:50am **OB EMERGENCIES-**

NCCR OB Emergencies 1, POST 1

Holly Boltz, Killdeer Area Ambulance

10:00-10:50am **EVIDENCE BASED GUIDELINES-**

NCCR Evidence Based Guidelines 1

Tom Dobrzynski, SHEMSE Fargo

11:00-11:50am **INFECTIOUS DISEASE-**

NCCR Infectious Disease 1, POST 1

Ann Hafner, Killdeer Area Ambulance

12:00-1:00pm Lunch & Vendor Networking

12:00-12:45pm Regional Meeting

1:00-1:50pm **CREW RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

Crew Resource Management 1

Tyler Kientopf, SHEMSE Bismarck NCCR

2:00-2:50pm **HYGIENE/VACCINATIONS-**

NCCR Hygiene/Vaccinations 1

Kayla Shaw, Sanford EMS Education Fargo

3:00-3:50pm **ACUTE CORONARY SYNDROMES-** NCCR ACS 1

Marcy Dawson, Sanford AirMed

4:00-4:50pm **CNS INJURY-** NCCR CNS Injury, POST 1

Mona Thompson, Kidder County Ambulance

4:50-5:00pm Wrap Up, Announcements & Door Prizes

Schedules may change. We encourage you to visit <https://www.ndemsa.org/Southwest-Conference/> for updates. If you have any questions about the sessions or registration, contact the office at 701-221-0567.

AmericInn Motel & Suites 75 East River Road South Medora, ND 58645. A block of 50 rooms have been reserved at \$82.10/night until August 20, 2019. For reservations call 701-623-4800 or 800-634-3444. Make sure to indicate you are with the EMS Conference. Hotel room must be cancelled 48 hours in advance.

See you in September!



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NDEMSA IS NOW ACCEPTING AWARD APPLICATIONS

There are numerous providers and services that go above and beyond the call of duty daily and it is our privilege to honor them in our Award Ceremony April 4, 2020. We hope you or your agency will consider recognizing the very best of North Dakota's EMS providers. The deadline for all awards, both regional and statewide, is **FEBRUARY 20, 2020**. All nominations must be submitted online at www.ndemsa.org/Awards.

The awards committee reviews the submissions and notifies the nominator whether or not their submission was chosen. This will allow those who did win an award to make plans to attend the 2020 EMS Annual Conference Awards Banquet and Table of Honor Ceremony on Saturday evening, April 4, 2020 in Bismarck. Some nominators choose to keep the award a "secret" while others are told ahead of time. The awards committee will only notify the nominator, not the nominee.

The 2020 regional awards include Siren Award, Rising Star Award, Telecommunications Award, and the Service of the Year Award. One regional service of the year nominee is chosen for the state EMS Service of the Year.

The statewide awards for 2020 include Media Award, Medical Director of the Year, Grace Knapp Award, Distinguished Service Award, and EMS Provider of the Year Award.

The Table of Honor Ceremony pays tribute to those volunteers and career EMS/Fire personnel who are no longer with us. You can help us honor such a person by nominating them for the Table of Honor Ceremony. The first ten Table of Honor nominations will be chosen.

The simple online form listing the criteria and nomination information for both the regional and statewide awards and the Table of Honor Ceremony can be found on our website at www.ndemsa.org under the "Awards Programs" tab.



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¹ Taught through NDCS for certificate or associate degrees

² Available as web-based video (counts as live instruction)

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~~CALL FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE 2020 NDEMSEA OFFICER AND REGIONAL DIRECTOR POSITIONS~~

Positions up for election in 2020 include;

- **PRESIDENT**
- **SECRETARY/ TREASURER**
- **TWO (2) DIRECTORS IN EACH REGION**

All officers and director terms are for two (2) years.

To be eligible for the President and Secretary/ Treasurer, candidates must be a current NDEMSEA member and have previously served a full term on the NDEMSEA board. Both terms will begin at the ND EMS Annual Conference after the annual meeting.

To be an eligible candidate for the regional director positions, he or she must be a current NDEMSEA member and will run in his or her respective region. The officer terms commence after the voting results have been counted and verified (on or around March 4th).

If you would like to be, or know someone who should be included on the 2020 ballot for the President, Secretary/ Treasurer, or officer position, please complete the nomination form, which can be found at www.ndemsa.org/Nominations-&-Elections.

How to Become a Candidate

The nomination process has nominations beginning July 1, 2019. Interested candidates will be required to submit a nomination statement and photo to be published in the winter *Response Time* and on social media sites. Nominations are due on or before December 31, 2019. This deadline allows for adequate time for a candidate biography to be shared on NDEMSEA news outlets prior to voting. Please review the Nomination and Election Rules. ~~In following election policies, nominations are NOT accepted from the floor during the annual meeting.~~

~~To submit a nomination statement and picture, please Email it to ndemsa.office@ndemsa.org.~~

~~The Voting Process~~

~~The ND EMS Association regional directors' nominations and elections will no longer be held at the regional meetings. The election will be held between February 14th and February 28th or immediately after the last Regional Conference. This year the election will be held February 17 through March 4th. Voting will occur through a combination of online and mail voting methods, as determined by the board of directors. A four person committee will count the votes. The committee will consist of an election chair and three additional appointed people.~~

~~If you have any questions about the voting process, please contact the office at 701-221-0567 or visit our nominations and elections page on our website.~~

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SAFETECH EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP RETREAT

September 14-15, 2019 • Courtyard Marriott North, Bismarck, ND

Designed for executives with a solid foundation in leadership, this program lets participants set the agenda in a facilitated, retreat-style session that focuses specifically on each participant’s leadership roles and organizational challenges. Participants come with the specific challenges they are facing in their roles and in their organizations. Utilizing an “open space” format, participants choose the topics. Brief presentations are made on the topics, and the balance of the allotted time is used to workshop each topic, with discussion, exercises and the sharing of best (and worst) practices. In the process, each leader is able to workshop his or her leadership challenges.

Level V or the **Executive Leadership Retreat**, is a time to come together with Academy graduates to learn, reflect and recharge.

Leading successfully amid today’s challenges demands confidence and great tools. It’s easy to fall back into the tyranny of the urgent and just manage your way through the day. This gathering is a retreat that will allow you to slow down and reset.

During this time:

- Slow down and reflect on how we are doing;
- Learn from each other’s experiences;
- Reflect on key leadership principles;
- Explore some new material around leading, engagement and culture; and
- Enjoy the fun and encouragement that comes with being with others who share similar challenges.

Maximum 26 students per each retreat.

NDEMSA Members: \$100.00

NDEMSA Non Members: \$150.00

Visit <https://www.ndemsa.org/Level-V-Retreat> to register.





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COMPREHENSIVE ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT (CAL S)

by Nicole Brunelle, RN, BSN. State Trauma System Coordinator



In June of 2019, the ND Division of Emergency Medical Systems - Trauma System funded and held a Comprehensive Advanced Life Support (CAL S) course for the first time in North Dakota. The division collaborated with the CAL S program out of Minnesota and SIM-ND to bring a high-fidelity medical simulation experience to 24 rural health care providers from eight different Trauma Level IV and V hospitals.

The exercise included:

- Seven highly trained medical educators with SIM-ND
- Seven highly trained and experienced CAL S instructors from Minnesota, Montana, and Wisconsin
- The rural health care teams that included: physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, and paramedics.

The 2.5 day course was held in Bismarck at the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section Building with three SIM-ND simulation trucks set up for hands-on skills training. All 24 pre-hospital and hospital health care providers completed and passed the course and received 19.25 continued education hours.

Due to all of the positive feedback from participants and instructors, the ND Division of Emergency Medical Systems - Trauma System will be working on holding future CAL S courses around the state. We believe the CAL S course provides a wonderful opportunity for our health care providers to strengthen their skills to be better prepared for those emergent situations in rural ND.

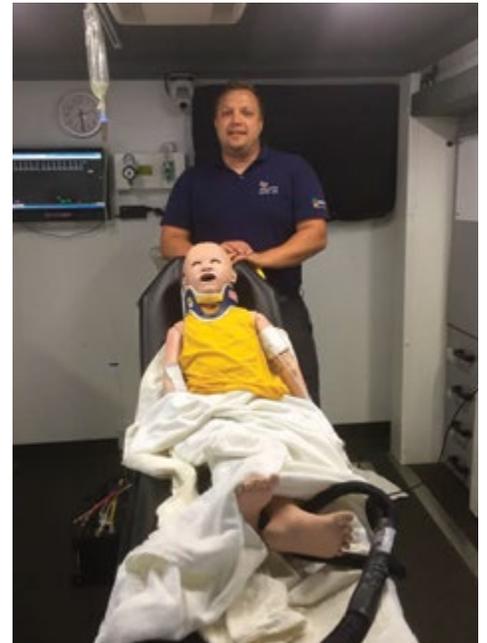




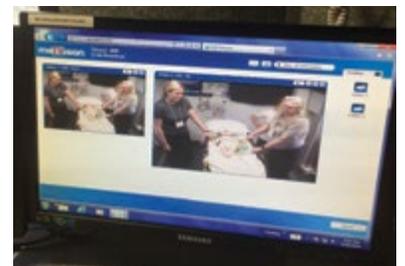
The CALS course provides a variety of educational resources designed specifically for rural health care teams to meet their emergency medical training needs.



The CALS course teaches an effective approach to the care of critically ill and injured patients manifesting a wide range of emergencies including: trauma, cardiac, strokes, pediatric, OB, neonatal, sepsis, and airway.



For more information on the CALS course and future course dates in ND, please contact Nicole Brunelle at nbrunelle@nd.gov or 701-328-1026.



TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN PTSD IN EMS PROVIDERS – LET’S CHANGE OUR CULTURE

By Mona Thompson, Kidder County Ambulance



NDEMSA has recently introduced a course called Taking Care of Our Own – Mental Wellness for Emergency Providers, and was able to reach several squads to educate them on developing a culture within EMS on mental health and awareness.

MY REFLECTION

As I sat back and reflected on my career in EMS going on almost three decades, I began to reminisce about that young fresh faced optimistic medic ready to save the world with her trusty LP 10 fully equipped with manual paddles delivering a triple dose of 200-300-360 joules followed by a bajillion does of epinephrine and performing chest compressions until our arms became like Jell-O, I’m just amazed as to how much EMS has changed, and how much we as EMS providers have changed over the years as well. The changes in our industry have brought about growth and progress, and I’ve seen how technology can improve patient care exponentially. But I’m also saddened when I consider how many folks in EMS have been negatively impacted by their job and the toll it has taken in their personal lives. We’re on the cutting edge of medicine, but we are so far behind when it comes to taking care of our own brothers and sisters in EMS and ensuring that their mental health is good.

EMS providers are expected to manage situations the public runs from, take control of the chaos, render aid and we’re always there to help, but the last to ask for help. We all experience pain, loss, and trauma that is beyond our coping capacity which can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, we find higher rates of suicide, job-

related burnout, compassion fatigue, clinical depression, and physical conditions which no longer allows the EMS provider to work in the field.

DO I HAVE PTSD?

PTSD is a traumatic event that has lingering impact on thoughts, emotions and behavior. EMS providers may have difficulty recovering from what they have experienced or witnessed and may experience the following symptoms of PTSD:

- Severe anxiety or fear
- Reoccurring nightmares
- Flashbacks – triggers
- Agitation and irritability
- Insomnia
- Self-destructive behavior
- Feeling emotionally detached from others
- Intrusive negative thoughts and emotions
- Guilt
- Loneliness, social withdrawal and isolation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Distrust and wariness
- Sudden reactions that don’t fit a given situation
- Hostility toward others for no apparent reason
- Depression



CHANGE IN OUR CULTURE

It's important to remember that not everyone reacts the same in any given situation. The ability to recover from traumatic experiences varies from person to person and some traumatic events have lingering impact on thoughts, emotions and behavior. We have created a culture in EMS in which I'm sure you've all heard the old lines, "Suck it up buttercup, this is what you signed up for" or "Just deal with it, it's part of the job" or "That's nothing, you should have seen the call I had" – all words of advice from the seasoned veterans of EMS most likely suffering in silence from the demons of the job. Nancy Caroline (Emergency Care in the Streets - 3rd edition) NEVER discussed the lingering traumatic effects of graphic images, ear piercing sounds or foul smells that can profoundly impact the EMS provider. Furthermore, there was NEVER any mention that in North Dakota rural EMS, we would often be taking care of our own family members, close friends and the folks we all know and love. Let's then top it off with the overall stress of the job, long hours, time away from family, gnarly co-workers and administrative indifference that has help create a recipe for emotional disaster.

Good mental health is essential to not only our emotional and physical well-being as EMS Providers, but it helps us to deal with the stress and chaos of the type of situations that are thrown at us. The first step to good mental health includes a positive change in our current culture and its view towards mental health. While it's important for providers to utilize EAP (Employee Assistant Programs) and CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management), research has shown that those programs alone are not enough. Support from peers and management combined with an effective mental wellness program helps providers recover more quickly when exposed to traumatic events. Conducting a post-incident defusing in which a spontaneous informal initial debriefing with peers occurs within a few hours after a traumatic event, has shown to improve overall mental health for the EMS responders.

BECOME RESILIENT

Resiliency means being able to bounce back after adversity, difficult experiences, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant stressors in life and living the best life possible working, playing, and loving. Become a Resilience Warrior – an individual who has experienced difficult times but embraced the obstacles and moved forward successfully.



A conscious decision is needed to make a positive change in the culture surrounding mental health. Nobody needs special training to support their co-workers. Ask them how they're doing, and be honest when others ask you how you're doing. Support each other, support yourself and take care of yourself. Talk and listen to each other. Develop a social support system of people you trust and can talk to. Build your physical strength by following a healthy diet and exercise routine. Practice good sleep habits. Practice relaxation exercises to reduce stress.

If you feel like you or one of your peers needs more advanced help, there are several resources out there. Help and encourage each other to get the help needed such as mental health counselors within your local healthcare system or the following websites provide excellent resources for help:

CODE GREEN: <http://codegreencampaign.org/>

SHARE THE LOAD: <https://www.nvfc.org/ems/>

SAFE CALL NOW: <https://www.safecallnow.org/>

REVIVING RESPONDERS: www.revivingresponders.com

FIRST LINK - <https://myfirstlink.org/>

PTSD RESOURCES: www.ptsdusa.org

ND STATE CISM TEAM [1-888-382-3367](tel:1-888-382-3367)

Be part of the solution. Together we all can work to make a change in the culture to help improve the well-being of our profession.



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UPCOMING NDEMSA EVENTS

September 14-15, 2019 Leadership V Retreat, Bismarck

September 18, 2019 NDEMSA Board Meeting, Bismarck

September 21-22, 2019 SW Conference, Medora

December 31, 2019 Board Nominations Due

January 25-26, 2020 NW Conference, Minot

February 7-8, 2020 SE Conference, Fargo

February 17- March 4, 2020 NDEMSA Board of Director Elections

February 14-16, 2020 NE Conference, Grand Forks

February 20, 2020 Award Nominations Due

April 2-4, 2020 ND EMS 45th Rendezvous, Bismarck

