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National Academies of Emergency Dispatch 2004 NAVIGATOR CONFERENCE

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CONFERENCE REPORT

**NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF EMERGENCY DISPATCH
2004 NAVIGATOR CONFERENCE**

Peter Hamilton

The National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED), an organization promoting safe and effective emergency dispatch services worldwide, has held its annual NAVIGATOR conference in May of this year in Las Vegas. With over 1000 registrants, the conference provides an effective forum for emergency service communications staff to meet and learn from some of the most experienced people in their fields.

Comprised of three allied Academies for medical, fire and police dispatching, the NAED supports first-responder related research, unified protocol application, legislation for emergency call center regulation, and strengthening of the emergency dispatch community through education, certification, and accreditation.

During the six days of pre-conference and conference activities, participants from police, fire and ambulance came for certification workshops, seminars, exhibits and special networking opportunities. The conference offered 81 sessions, with several keynote speakers including General Dennis Reimer (retired), former Army Chief of Staff and currently Director of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism.

The Academy has its headquarters in the USA, and it has developed a Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) which is widely used throughout North America, Canada, the UK, Australia and Europe. The protocols are prepared and marketed by Priority Dispatch Corporation, based in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The MPDS is a standardised, clinical calltaking system which allows the emergency calltaker to obtain appropriate patient information, determine the correct response, and provide the necessary pre-arrival information to the caller. The protocols are available in a manual flipchart system and an electronic version known as 'ProQA'. TO obtain NAED certification, each dispatcher is required to attend and successfully complete a 3 day Emergency Medical Dispatcher course, which provides the dispatcher with the knowledge and skills required to use the protocol system.

The Navigator conference contained various sessions of interest to emergency services calltakers, dispatchers, supervisors, training and management staff, presented by industry experts from around the world. Guest speakers and presenters were chosen from among an international group of professionals with years of experience in emergency telecommunications.

Several 'streams' were offered to suit the various interests of the attendees.

GENERAL INTEREST: Current events and special public interest issues were addressed in seminars designed to keep the attendees informed on the changing world of dispatch. Also included were general discussion forums and presentations including the following :-

- Improving health and fitness in the communications centre,
- Tools for building a stress-resilient workplace,
- Domestic violence and its impact on the communications centre,
- Examining Ethics : Why things go wrong

EMERGENCY DISPATCHERS: These sessions focused on the dispatcher as the 'first responder' in the patient care chain. Educational breakout sessions, designed specifically for line calltakers and emergency dispatchers, addressed a wide variety of specific dispatch related issues from stress management, to legal liability, to continuing dispatch education.

Dr Jeff Clawson, Board of Certification Chair, spoke about the increasing effectiveness of automatic external defibrillators, and the positive impact the ambulance calltaker can provide in ensuring that correct procedure is followed.

Marie Leroux, Council of Standards Medical Chair, led a presentation on changes to the pre-arrival instructions for CPR and emergency childbirth. These changes are to be incorporated into the next release of the protocols.

OPERATIONS & TRAINING COORDINATORS: Sessions were held with dispatch related content aimed at communications supervisors, operations managers, instructors, and public safety educators.

Scott Freitag, NAED Executive Director, led a panel discussion on 'How to operate an effective communications center', covering such topics as quality assurance and improvement, staffing, equipment and standard procedures.

Several pre- and post-conference training sessions and workshops were provided in the areas of hazardous materials recognition, disaster contingency planning, emergency data interpretation and dispatch liability issues.

LEADERS & MANAGERS: Managerial sessions specifically designed for ambulance, fire and police supervisors, communications centre managers and Medical Directors were provided regarding current legal issues and available options, risk management, leadership training, and quality assurance tools and techniques.

UNDERSTANDING OF MEDICAL PROTOCOLS: Several forums and presentations provided an understanding of the research and development required for protocol introduction and maintenance, including the future direction of CPR.

The NAED is assessing the currently emerging trend regarding the de-emphasis of initial mouth-to-mouth in CPR. Certain situations appear to benefit from providing compressions before giving any breaths and also from extending the time that the compressions are continued uninterrupted. Improved survival rates appear to be attainable with such changes in emergency telephone-directed procedures provided by the ambulance calltaker.

The Navigator conference is held in a different location in the US each year, and has been steadily increasing in popularity and attendance. The networking opportunities for ambulance communications centers are often few and far between, however the Navigator conference provides the perfect forum for an international gathering of emergency communications personnel. Several formal (and many informal) social

events were scheduled during the three day conference, and being in Las Vegas, the choices were many and varied.

AUSTRALIA

The NAED oversees the training and clinical processes of the Priority Dispatch System in Australia through local regional representation, and through the Australasian Standards Council. This Council consists of Medical Directors, dispatch supervisors and managers who provide professional input into the clinical, cultural and language aspects of the protocols for local requirements. These recommended changes are assessed and approved by the NAED for use in the Australasian version of the protocols. The Medical Priority Dispatch System is in use in Queensland, Northern Territory, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

NEXT YEARS CONFERENCE

Next year's Navigator conference will be held at the Marriott Waterside in Baltimore, Maryland from April 22-27, 2005. Further information can be obtained from the Academy website at www.emergencydispatch.org or by contacting Peter Hamilton, NAED Australasian Regional Director on peter.hamilton@emergencydispatch.org.