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National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) NAVIGATOR 2007 Conference

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CONFERENCE REVIEW

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National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED)
NAVIGATOR 2007 Conference,
Las Vegas, USA
24th -26th April, 2007

Peter Hamilton

The National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED), an organization promoting safe and effective emergency dispatch services worldwide, held its annual NAVIGATOR conference in Las Vegas towards the end of April of this year.

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.

Held at the Riviera Hotel & Casino, the conference provides an outstanding educational and networking event for all emergency service communications staff.

The Academy has its headquarters in the USA, and 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. There are over 40,000 members in 15 countries, and around 2800 communications centres using the Academies' protocols and products.

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, which were presented by industry experts from around the world. Guest speakers and presenters respresented an array of international professionals with years of experience in emergency telecommunications.

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

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SPECIAL INTEREST: These sessions offered topics such as communications team building, mental health for dispatchers, and communications ethics. Each was presented by animated, knowledgeable presenters who were obviously well-versed in communications centre issues.

EMERGENCY DISPATCHERS: The proper definition and identification of agonal breathing proved a popular session, primarily as the most recent versions of the medical protocols focus on agonal breathing as an identifiable phenomenon. Jerry Overton, Executive Director, Richmond Ambulance Authority (Virginia USA) presented a session on new perspectives concerning low acuity calls.

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

LEADERS & MANAGERS: Managerial sessions specifically designed for ambulance, fire and police supervisors, communications centre managers and Medical Directors covered current legal issues and available options, risk management, leadership training, and quality assurance tools and techniques. Jay Fitch, PhD is a leading EMS / public safety expert, ran one of his sessions on the strategies required to ensure that the communications centre obtains the appropriate recognition it deserves.

2008 CONFERENCE

Next year's Navigator conference will be held at the Baltimore Inner Harbor, Maryland USA from April 23-25, 2008. Further information can be obtained from the Academy website at: www.emergencydispatch.org or by contacting Peter Hamilton, NAED Australasian Regional Director at: peter.hamilton@emergencydispatch.org.

About the Author:

Peter Hamilton is an independent emergency services contractor who has been providing training and managerial support to various Australasian agencies for over 20 years. As a regular traveler to all parts of Australasia and the USA, Peter has developed a range of training and support strategies that have been beneficial in maintaining communication centre effectiveness.