
Mourning lives lost on duty

FROM THIS SIDE

We received very sad news during the February Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council meetings that a Valley Air Care helicopter had crashed in a bay area around South Padre Island, killing the medic, nurse and pilot. Lines of duty deaths in any profession are heartbreaking. With public safety, it's sometimes even more difficult to come to terms when people who were on their way to rescue a patient in a medical crisis end up losing their own lives. The three crewmembers – paramedic Michael Sanchez, nurse Raul Garcia and pilot Robert Goss – will be inducted in the Hall of Honor at Texas EMS Conference during the Awards Luncheon on November 25 in Fort Worth. Our deepest sympathy goes to their families and friends, and to all our colleagues in South Texas. We will not forget.

The Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) has been around for nine years now, and it's been a lengthy journey from its beginnings in 1999 when legislators passed the bill that created a new advisory committee. The bill specified 15 members, each representing a different part of the EMS and trauma system, to be appointed by the governor. The beginning, as Chair Ed Racht MD will attest, was a little rocky. The EMS and trauma communities were not cohesive, and various factions were moving in different directions. Job one for the new advisory committee was to re-visit where the Texas EMS/Trauma System needed to go, and how we were going to get there. Together. The question was, given the fractious environment at the time, could it be done? As always, the will of unified Texans should never be underestimated. GETAC has now brought the EMS and trauma communities together to speak in one voice on many issues, thanks in no small part to the dedication of GETAC council members and committees, and in particular to the dedicated stakeholders who faithfully attend the meetings to make sure their voices are heard.

Approaching a decade of service, GETAC council members decided to take a fresh look at its structure to see if it was still meeting the needs of the stakeholders. Council members converged in Kerrville for a retreat in late January and after two days of discussion, came up with a proposal for restructuring GETAC committees to address stakeholder needs. Dr. Racht presented the proposed structure at the February GETAC meeting in Austin. You can see the presentation at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/GETACCouncil.shtm. The proposed changes will be discussed more thoroughly at the GETAC meeting in May. I strongly encourage you to look at the proposal and then come to GETAC in May and share your perspectives with your colleagues across the state. As Dr. Racht has said many times over the years: "We are more powerful as one than we are as many."

If you're interested in deploying personnel or units during a disaster, please visit our website and look over the memorandums of agreement (MOAs). DSHS, with input from stakeholders, is reviewing the MOAs to see what improvements can be made. No decisions thus far – but any changes we make will go on our website. And we've made the MOA easier to find on our site – just look for the ambulances at the top and click on that link. Hurricane season is just a few months away.

In the rush of everyday work life, we tend to forget the importance of what we do and the impact we have on others. EMS Week and Trauma Awareness Month are celebrated in May, and I hope you'll plan some activities to let the folks in your community know about what you do and the challenges you face. You can still order EMS Week packets from the American College of Emergency Physicians. See page 7 for more information.

Lastly, it's not too early to start making hotel reservations for Texas EMS Conference. The GETAC meetings will be at the Renaissance Worthington, so if that's your preference, please make your reservations soon. Turn to page 25 for more information.

Thanks again for all you do, and see you at GETAC in May...



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