



Ambulance owner convicted for fraud

Olusola Elliott, the owner of the Double Daniels, an ambulance provider in the Houston area, was convicted of six counts of health care fraud for billing Medicare for more than \$1.7 million. The charges carry a maximum potential penalty of ten years in prison each, along with a \$250,000 fine. Elliott, 44, was one of four EMS providers arrested last May for alleged fraudulent Medicare billing. The others were Grace Anassi, owner, and her husband Thomas Anassi, driver, at Touching Hearts EMS of Houston, who billed \$886,688 in claims; and Okechukwu Ofoegbu, owner of Cardiomax EMS, who billed \$1.73 million. A fourth operator, Gwendolyn Climmons-Johnson, a lawyer and owner of Urgent Response EMS of Houston, was accused of nearly a million dollars in false billings. The Anassis have not been tried. Ofoegbu pleaded guilty last fall and awaits sentencing. A trial for Climmons-Johnson was scheduled for April.

2013 Texas EMS Hall of Honor Annual Golf Tournament & Silent Auction

The Texas EMS Hall of Honor Annual Golf Tournament and Silent Auction, hosted by the Texas Association of Air Medical Services (TAAMS) has been held for the last two years in conjunction with Texas EMS Conference. All proceeds raised go to benefit the Texas EMS Hall of Honor. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) honors emergency medical services personnel who lost their lives while on EMS duty with the Texas EMS Hall of Honor memorial. The plaques permanently hang at the DSHS EMS Central Office in Austin, 8407 Wall Street.



Individuals are inducted into the Texas EMS Hall of Honor at the annual Texas EMS Conference in November; however in the past, families had to pay for their own travel expenses to attend this event. This fundraiser's only goal is to collect funds to pay for all travel expenses for those families that have already suffered a hardship by losing their loved one.

To date, TAAMS has raised over \$14,000 from the annual golf tournament and silent auction. The funds are held in a separate account within the TAAMS organization and, when requested by DSHS, are released for distribution to the families for travel expenses. This year we hope to raise even more money for the Hall of Honor. Here are a few ways you can participate:

- Register a foursome for the Texas EMS Hall of Honor Annual Golf Tournament
- Be a sponsor
- Donate to the silent auction (i.e., gift baskets, company promotional items, guns, airline tickets, hotel stays, sports memorabilia, etc.)

For golf registration, sponsorship or silent auction opportunities, please visit www.taams.org. Or for more information on the golf tournament, contact Brock Miller, RN, at brock@air-medical.com or 361-765-0695. For the silent auction, contact Jim Speier, NREMT-P, at jspeier@etmc.org or 903-596-3351. Also look for information on the Texas Association of Air Medical Services website, www.taams.org.

Oklahoma medical helicopter crashes

A medical helicopter crashed in Oklahoma City February 22, killing the pilot and flight nurse and severely injuring paramedic Billy Wynne, 31. Wynne is certified as a paramedic in Oklahoma and Texas. Another man aiding rescue efforts was also injured. There were no patients on board. The EagleMed helicopter, a Eurocopter AS-350, had just taken off from Baptist Hospital and was en route to Watonga. A large storm system had blanketed much of the Midwest and Plains in snow, but it wasn't immediately clear if authorities believe weather played a role in the crash.

Grants available for ECA training

Are you in a rural area that needs more EMS personnel? DSHS has a total of \$50,000 this fiscal year available for EMS training programs, registered first responder organizations (FROs), coordinators and instructors to conduct ECA courses in rural or underserved areas of the state lacking local EMS training resources. Grant funds cover the cost of instruction and textbooks, as well as other expenses such as printing and supplies. OEMS/TS will accept grant applications on a first-come-first-served basis until the funds run out for the fiscal year. Eligibility requirements for ECAT grants: A minimum of three students; students must agree to perform emergency care attendant services for at least one year with a local emergency medical service provider or first responder organization; services must be provided in a designated rural or underserved area of Texas, as determined by zip code or county; and the course coordinator must be affiliated with an educational program. And give yourself plenty of time: It takes about 60 days for an ECAT grant to work its way through the DSHS approval process. For more information, go to www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/TrainingFunding.shtm or contact Haramain Shaikh at haramain.shaikh@dshs.state.tx.us or call 512-834-67000, ext. 2377.



Emergency funding available

Has your area suffered a devastating event that might qualify you for Extraordinary Emergency Funding? The Extraordinary Emergency Fund is available to assist licensed EMS providers, hospitals and registered first responder organizations if unforeseeable events cause a degradation of service to the community. Situations that may severely reduce or incapacitate emergency response capability are considered extraordinary emergencies. For information, contact Haramain Shaikh at haramain.shaikh@dshs.state.tx.us or call 512-834-67000, ext. 2377.



Recently awarded:

Clear Lake Emergency Medical Corps, \$30,000 for ambulance replacement
Bandera County EMS, \$138,995 for ambulance and equipment replacement

Public safety broadband newsletter available

Over the next few years, public safety responders, information technology experts, government officials and private sector partners will be working together to build a new network for public safety responders. The Texas Safety Broadband Program (TxPSBP) has a free e-newsletter that will keep you up to date on the progress of the network, which will bring greater speeds and a dedicated, private bandwidth that will allow greater use of real-time video, public safety apps and other capabilities. All areas of public safety will be included. To subscribe, go to <http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07e6phk39iha2zmiw8/start>. For more information, contact Lesia Dickson at Lesia.Dickson@dps.texas.gov.

On Duty

**GETAC
meeting dates**

**May 15-17
in Austin**

**August 21-23
in Austin**

**November 23-25
in Fort Worth
in conjunction
with Texas EMS
Conference**