

Fire Service-Based EMS...There's a New Tool Kit For Your Use

By: Chief Dennis Compton

Many fire service leaders from management and labor have strongly advocated for the importance of being able to effectively represent our fire service-based EMS systems in the political arena. This includes focusing those efforts at the national, state and local levels of government where decisions are made on a regular basis that significantly impact EMS service delivery capabilities of fire departments. This issue is especially in the spotlight now because of changes being implemented incrementally throughout the country with the phase-in of the Federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). Educating elected officials and other policy-makers about the advantages of fire service-based EMS will be even more critical as fire departments consider whether to engage in opportunities and options that are sure to emerge over the next two or three years.

To assist the fire service with these challenges, a small group of major organizations recently came together to significantly overhaul the Fire Service-Based EMS Electronic Tool Kit that was originally developed in 2010. These partners included representatives from the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF); the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association; the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA); the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC); and the Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI). This new electronic

tool kit can be accessed on the websites of each of the above organizations. Other organizations will provide links from their websites to the Tool Kit as well.

This Second Edition of the Fire Service-Based EMS Electronic Tool Kit is intended to provide fire service managers and union officials with a great deal of current information on fire service-based emergency medical services. The Tool Kit includes two sections:

Section One provides information and tools related to fire service-based EMS in general; and

Section Two provides specific information and tools directly related to the impact of the Federal PPACA on fire service-based EMS, as well as opportunities that the PPACA might present to fire departments as it is phased-in.

Both Sections - One and Two – include “talking points”, as well as various electronic links to documents described within the Tool Kit. There are also links to other resources, including websites and videos. Users may access these links and download resources at any time.

The information provided in the electronic tool kit covers many facets of fire service-based EMS. The “talking points” that are included can be used when communicating inside and outside of fire departments, including during presentations to the public, the media, elected officials, public managers, the medical community and others. The various links provide information covering the historical background of fire service-based EMS, including an overview of

deployment and service delivery issues. Also included in the Electronic Tool Kit are documents that stress the importance of effective interaction with the medical community, as well as EMS system components such as training/certification and billing/collection. Information about the operations of private EMS providers and other important areas are also stressed within the Tool Kit.

As previously mentioned, this new edition of the electronic tool kit is also rich with information related to the PPACA and opportunities that might become available to fire service leaders as they design and manage adjustments to their fire service-based EMS systems. New and enhanced partnerships between fire departments and the health care community, as well as others, are sure to be important as the PPACA is more clearly defined and implemented. This tool kit will provide information and tools to assist fire departments in so many ways. As users review the Tool Kit, they are encouraged to decide for themselves what information – opportunities – and options best interface with their specific system, situation and needs.

Some of the decisions made regarding the future of fire service-based EMS will be made by leaders on the inside of fire departments, but many of the decisions will also be made or approved by leaders on the outside of the department. These include a broad group of people, including elected and appointed public officials. Having good information, data and other tools will be critical to fire departments when making their case for maintaining and enhancing fire service-based EMS

systems in the near and long term future. Hopefully, this electronic tool kit will provide a quality tool that might help fire departments be more successful. We should thank the IAFF; Metro Chiefs; IFSTA; IAFC and the CFSI for dedicating the resources, knowledge, motivation and leadership necessary to create this Fire Service-Based EMS Electronic Tool Kit. Now – as in almost all cases - it’s up to leaders within the fire service to make good use of it!

About the Author:

Chief Dennis Compton served as the Fire Chief in Mesa, Arizona for five years and as Assistant Fire Chief in Phoenix, Arizona, where he served for twenty-seven years. Chief Compton is the Past Chairman of the Executive Board of the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) and Past Chairman of the Congressional Fire Services Institute’s National Advisory Committee. He is currently the Chairman of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Board of Directors. Dennis is also Co-Chairman of the Fire Service-Based EMS Advocates Coalition Steering Committee.