



Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee

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60th Montana Legislature

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September 9, 2008

Joan Miles, Director
Department of Public Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 4210
Helena, MT 59604-4210

Dear Director Miles:

The June 2008 legislative performance audit of emergency medical services (EMS) in Montana recommended that the Department of Public Health and Human Services undertake a number of activities to improve Montana's system of emergency medical response.

The Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee reviewed these recommendations as part of its interim Senate Joint Resolution 5 study of emergency medical services. The committee strongly believes that the Department must follow up on the recommendations to ensure that both Montanans and visitors to our state are assured that their emergency calls will be answered by a workforce that is well trained and properly equipped.

Thus the interim committee agreed on Aug. 22 to introduce legislation as proposed in Audit Recommendations #4 and #5, to clarify medical direction statutes and to clarify the handling of complaints involving emergency medical technicians and EMS agencies.

Because much of the responsibility for ensuring that emergency medical services are ready to respond rests with DPHHS through its oversight and licensing abilities, the committee also agreed to encourage DPHHS to take the following steps:

- Develop an administrative rule as proposed in Audit Recommendation #1, to clearly define the capabilities that an EMS provider must have to be licensed to provide care at the Basic Life Support with Advanced Life Support Endorsement licensure level.
- Complete and put into use a comprehensive information management system as suggested in Audit Recommendation #7 and work with EMS providers to ensure they can and do enter data into the system.
- Work with the Board of Medical Examiners as suggested in Audit Recommendation #8, to ensure that EMS data is shared between the two state agencies to improve analysis and reporting of EMS system issues.
- Report to the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee by Sept. 15, 2010, on any recommendations or changes made as a result of Audit Recommendation #12, to revise the governance structure for EMS.
- Provide periodic progress reports to the committee during the 2009-2010 interim on the

following audit recommendations:

- ▶ Audit Recommendation #2, which asks the department to collect information on EMS provider coverage areas, staffing activities, and service availability, determine why gaps in Advanced Life Support service exist, and work with stakeholders to address service gaps.
- ▶ Audit Recommendation #3, to improve data collection and analysis of EMS incident response times by establishing response time benchmarks, revising administrative rules to require providers to record and report "at patient" times, and enforcing compliance with the rule requiring quarterly reporting of EMS incidents.
- ▶ Audit Recommendation #6, to work with stakeholders to develop an objective, data-driven oversight approach to evaluate the EMS system and ensure quality improvement efforts.
- ▶ Audit Recommendation #9, to develop and put in place a strategic plan to help in developing the state's EMS system and strengthening management activities.
- ▶ Audit Recommendation #10, to revise the roles and responsibilities of the EMS and Trauma Systems Section staff to better achieve the section's mission and meet national EMS standards.
- ▶ Audit Recommendation #11, to strengthen the management controls of the section's regulatory activities involving inspections, vehicle permits, complaint documentation, and EMS unit licensure fees.

Again, the committee has become well acquainted this interim with the importance of ensuring that Montana's EMS system is not only viable, but also that proper oversight is in place to ensure that EMS providers and individual EMTs are ready to provide a quick and appropriate response when called.

Committee members believe the steps outlined above will help Montana's EMS system meet that goal. We hope DPHHS will support the committee legislation involving Audit Recommendations #4 and #5 (now known as LC 338), undertake the activities recommended by the audit, and provide the next interim committee with the updates we've identified.

Sincerely,

Edith Clark
Presiding Officer

c: Jane Smilie
Todd Harwell
Jim DeTienne

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