



NAEMT Position Statement Standardizing the Role of EMS with DHS Fusion Centers

Statement:

NAEMT believes that the level and quality of participation by EMS in DHS fusion centers should be standardized across the national network to ensure that fusion centers have consistent access to information and intelligence collected by EMS. Standardized input from EMS would provide fusion centers with accurate, real-time surveillance, promote better bidirectional flows of information between EMS and the fusion centers, improve the analysis capacity of fusion centers and improve responder situational awareness and safety. Fusion centers should work with EMS agencies through an agency-appointed Threat Liaison Officer (TLO) trained in suspicious activity reporting (SAR) to obtain local intelligence and, in return, provide relevant intelligence to disseminate back to the agency.

Background:

In the wake of September 11th, federal leaders recognized the need to exchange intelligence information between law enforcement and public safety entities with regard to emerging threats. The creation of fusion centers within DHS provided a channel for intelligence information exchange between local, state and federal law enforcement agencies as well as other pertinent organizations. Fusion centers provided a repository for first responders to report unusual activity that would be captured in a national database. Over the past decade, there has been a shift in fusion centers from focusing exclusively on terrorist-related intelligence gathering to a more all-hazards information sharing mission.

In 2004 and 2005, many states began creating fusion centers with various local, state, and federal funds. At the time, no standards or guidelines were in existence, causing silos of information that were incapable of information exchange. In response, *Fusion Center Guidelines* were developed by the Department of Justice's Law Enforcement Intelligence Fusion Center Focus Group (FCFG) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC or Council) Intelligence and Information Sharing Working Group to integrate public safety and private sector entities.

Each fusion center has its own unique characteristics and infrastructure. The guidelines directly call for the inclusion of EMS, as Emergency Services (non-law enforcement) but the inclusion of EMS is at the sole discretion of the Fusion Center's policies and command staff. EMS representation should be standard in every Fusion Center for the benefit of maximizing data intake, intelligence gathering and information sharing.

EMS is performed in a dynamic and ever-changing environment. In many instances, EMS practitioners are the first to notice suspicious activity, some of which can be linked to a variety of threats, including violence, crime, and CBRNE. EMS routinely captures data on its patients and

the response scene. However, inconsistent utilization, mining and integration of EMS data diminishes a Fusion Center's threat analysis and ultimately the nation's ability to identify, prepare for, and respond to threats, disasters and public health emergencies.

EMS can be a valued partner to fusion centers in a multitude of ways:

- Trained EMS practitioners can be used as intelligence sensors to identify suspicious indicators of terrorism and to report those indicators to intelligence fusion centers.
- EMS managers can provide medical intelligence within fusion centers to help those centers analyze medical data that could provide indicators of potential threats.
- EMS managers can develop and disseminate medical intelligence briefs, which inform EMS, fire, law and other responders of medically based threats to their health and safety.
- EMS can be the lead developer of multi-disciplinary mass casualty response plans and other emergency medical-related planning and exercising, including networks of ambulance strike teams to respond to areas devastated by catastrophic events.
- EMS data can augment and enhance current syndromic surveillance systems to provide earlier warnings of a pandemic or terrorist incident.

Federal guidelines and a variety of research have stated that EMS should play a greater role in intelligence gathering, disaster response, and syndromic surveillance. EMS should be represented within every fusion center to facilitate the exchange of information and data, provide medical intelligence and develop response plans, along with medically-related plans and exercises. Our nation's security and threat response are dependent upon it.

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