



For Immediate Release

Contact: Matthew Corcoran
Communications Coordinator
mcorcoran@comcare.org
202-429-0574

COMCARE and VHHA Launch Integrated Patient Tracking Initiative

WASHINGTON, September 28, 2005 – With the participation of many national emergency response and healthcare organizations and professionals, COMCARE and the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA) launched a collaborative Working Group to explore how integrated patient tracking systems should be developed to improve emergency response to day-to-day and mass casualty incidents. The first objective of the Working Group is to develop a national set of common requirements for such systems. Thirty-six national, regional and local agencies have agreed to participate. A list of the participating organizations is attached.

Patient tracking systems can incorporate and provide a wide range of information about victims from and to a large number of sources, depending on how they are designed. The Working Group held its first meeting focusing on the critical goals systems need to achieve, along with privacy and legal issues.

COMCARE Board member, and President of the National Association of State EMS Directors, Dr. Robert Bass said, "Patient tracking is an exciting topic because it links two of the Nation's most important medical efforts: homeland security and patient healthcare information technology. The challenge for our group is to develop requirements for systems that are used to improve every day emergency response, but can easily be scaled up to support mass casualty incidents.

"This initiative is an effective way to bring together representatives from all the different points along the emergency medical response, public health and emergency management continuum," Bass continued. "I commend VHHA and its emergency coordinator Steve Ennis for their leadership in this project."

Members of the Working Group include experts from federal, state and local agencies, representing emergency management, emergency medical services (EMS), fire, hospitals, public health, the American Red Cross, 9-1-1, and private industry. The first Working Group meeting began with each of the key professions describing the information it needs from patient tracking systems. In the first meeting, Dr. William Braithwaite, Chief Medical Officer of the eHealth Initiative, led a discussion of security and privacy concerns. Dr. Braithwaite stated, "While privacy and security must be a key component of all integrated patient tracking systems, the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) should not be seen as a roadblock to exchange patient information between healthcare providers – particularly in emergencies."

VHHA includes 62 member health systems and hospitals, representing 95 community, psychiatric and specialty hospitals throughout Virginia. VHHA's mission is to improve the health status of the communities its members serve. See www.vhha.org. COMCARE is a national non-profit alliance dedicated to advancing emergency response. COMCARE's 100+ organizational members represent the wide diversity of the emergency response community. For more information visit www.comcare.org.

Patient Tracking Working Group Members

- **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)**
- **American Ambulance Association (AAA)**
- **American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)**
- **American Hospital Association**
- **American Public Health Association (APHA)**
- **American Red Cross**
- **Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS)**
- **Association of Public Health Laboratories**
- **Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)**
- **Brain Trauma Foundation**
- **Center for Disease Control – BioSense Program**
- **Center for Disease Control – Health Information Privacy Office**
- **Central Hospital Emergency Management Committee**
- **COMCARE**
- **Department of Defense (DoD)**
 - **Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense**
 - **US Army Corps of Engineers**
- **District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency**
- **Eastern Hospital Emergency Management Committee**
- **eHealth Initiative**
- **Emergency Nurses Association (ENA)**
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**
- **The George Washington University Hospital**
- **Health and Human Services (HHS) – Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness**
- **Healthcare Information Management Systems Society (HIMSS)**
- **Inova Fairfax Hospital**
- **International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)**
- **International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)**
- **Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory**
- **Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)**
- **Maryland Institute for EMS Systems (MIEMSS)**
- **Medical College of Virginia**
- **Mid-America Regional Council (MARC)**
- **Minnesota Department of Public Health**
- **Montgomery County EMS**
- **National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED)**
- **National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO)**
- **National Association of EMTs (NAEMT)**
- **National Association of Health Data Organizations (NAHDO)**
- **National Association of State EMS Directors (NAEMSD)**
- **National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)**
- **National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)**

- **National Emergency Number Association (NENA)**
- **National EMSC Data Analysis Resource Center (NEDARC)**
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)**
- **Northern Virginia EMS Council**
- **Northern Virginia Hospital Alliance (NVHA)**
- **National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)**
- **Old Dominion EMS Alliance**
- **Public Health Data Standards Consortium (PHDSC)**
- **Richmond (Va.) Fire & Emergency Services**
- **Ryder Memorial Trauma Center**
- **Saint Louis Area Regional Response Systems (STARRS)**
- **San Diego Public Health**
- **San Mateo County EMS**
- **Shenandoah University**
- **University of Memphis**
- **University of North Carolina/North Carolina EMS**
- **University of North Carolina Medical System**
- **University of Pittsburg Medical Center for Biosecurity**
- **University of Virginia**
- **Valley Health System**
- **Virginia Consolidated Laboratories**
- **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**
- **Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA)**
- **Washington Hospital Center**

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