

# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

*Edward G. Rendell, Governor*

*Calvin B. Johnson, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary of Health*

April 5, 2004

Dear Elected Official:

Please join us in celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Emergency Medical Services Week, May 16 to 24, 2004. This year's theme, "*EMS: There When You Need Us*," emphasizes that no matter what the emergency or when it occurs, EMS is there to provide immediate life-saving care and transportation.

Your Emergency Medical Services System includes the public bystanders, medical First Responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, nurses, and physicians who staff the air and ground ambulances, hospitals, training institutes, medical command facilities, specialty care centers, injury prevention and public education programs. All are important components of the system, connected through communication systems and 911 centers.

Approximately 50,000 EMS practitioners are credentialed and nearly 1,000 ambulance services licensed in Pennsylvania. The system responds to approximately 1.5 million patients a year. Recent improvements include the placement of over 300 automated external defibrillators (AED) in the last 2 years, new protocols and training to support emergency response to terrorism threats, and the use of epi-pens for patients with allergic reactions by basic life support and quick response services.

EMS Week is an opportunity for you to recognize prehospital and hospital EMS practitioners for the many hours they spend training and delivering care to the residents and visitors to your community. Recognition has a very positive effect on recruitment and retention and is an invaluable investment to make in your own community. Services are struggling to attract and keep people so that they can continue to be there when you need them. You can help by acknowledging them and, if budgets permit, sponsoring an event during EMS Week especially for this purpose.

Some of the ways that communities and services are planning already to recognize EMS practitioners include hosting a picnic or brunch with elected officials, conducting award ceremonies, sponsoring a night out at a baseball game and putting a notice of appreciation in the local papers.

The need for emergency medical services will increase as our population ages. Your active support to EMS is critical to ensure that adequate access to EMS continues in the future, in your local community and in Pennsylvania. Please contact the EMS Office at the Department of Health if we can be of assistance in the preparations for EMS Week. Our number is 717-787-8740. Thank you for your support on this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Margaret E. Trimble  
Director, EMS Office