

# Code Blue Project

## Activity Report

July 1, 2003 – December 31, 2003

**Overview:** The Code Blue Project is a partnership between state, regional and local EMS agencies intended to identify, prioritize and fund essential emergency medical services equipment. The project has benefited enormously from the assistance, both financial and technical, of the Denali Commission. Through the Denali Commission, the Code Blue Project has been able to fund critical EMS infrastructure, primarily certain categories of patient care and communications equipment.

**Activities:** During the reporting period, the State and Regional EMS Programs continued to work with local communities, such as Ketchikan, to complete Code Blue projects and with others, like the City and Borough of Sitka, to plan for new projects consistent with the mission of Code Blue and the definition of “infrastructure.”

The Regional EMS Offices worked directly with local EMS agencies to refine and prioritize lists of essential EMS equipment. The Department of Health and Social Services allocated funds to the Regional EMS Offices and specific local communities to purchase items included in the category of “critical EMS infrastructure.” Examples of these items include: oxygen kits; spinal immobilization kits; VHF base station radios; splints; pediatric dosage calculation systems; and ambulance gurneys.

<b>Financial Activity/Awards</b>	
<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Matanuska Susitna Borough	\$30,000
Interior Region EMS Council, Inc.	\$9,735
Southern Region EMS Council, Inc.	\$10,741
Southeast Region EMS Council, Inc.	\$36,070
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corp.	\$4,000
City of Bethel	\$39,100
Maniilaq Association	\$18,684
Norton Sound Health Corporation	\$12,375
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$160,705</b>

A table containing information on the amounts and recipients of these allocations is found above. The Regional EMS Offices have purchased nearly all of patient care equipment on the infrastructure list and are, as part of their annual grant preparation activities, working with local communities to identify and prioritize needs for essential equipment.

**Challenges:** The Code Blue Project continues to face some significant challenges, including:

- The need to coordinate with other funding agencies to avoid duplication of efforts;
- The small staff sizes of grantees and competing demands on their time; and
- Changes in EMS communications infrastructure in Alaska.

The United States Department of Homeland Security, through the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management,<sup>1</sup> provides grants to local emergency services (fire, emergency medical, and law enforcement) to improve the jurisdiction’s ability to detect and respond to actual or threatened terrorist events. The grant funds may be used to fund certain communications and medical equipment, some of which overlaps with items considered “EMS Infrastructure.” We have developed a close working relationship with the manager of the Homeland Security grants and were able to brief our

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<sup>1</sup> Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Department's representative on the committee involved in distributing funds regarding Code Blue efforts. By sharing lists of equipment that had been requested and providing information on our intentions to fund particular items, we were able to avoid duplication and ensure that items would be compatible. This information sharing occurs also with the Rural Automated External Defibrillator project and others.

Our seven Regional EMS Offices have relatively small staffs with workloads that have increased significantly as local funding for EMS training and operations has eroded. To increase the efficiency of the Code Blue Project and to focus workloads more appropriately, the Regional EMS Offices will continue to work on funding infrastructure related to patient care and small communications projects. The Section of Community Health and EMS will work directly with local communities on larger EMS communications projects, while keeping the Regional EMS Offices informed and able to contribute to the decision making processes.

The Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Project is changing the face of emergency communications in Alaska. The project is a partnership between the Department of Defense, the State of Alaska, and local communities. It provides capabilities that far exceed those of conventional systems used in Alaska. The relatively rapid deployment of the system, coupled with the issues associated with migrating to, or integrating, the new digital system has made communications planning more difficult. We are working closely with ALMR Project staff to ensure that we are making good decisions about hardware purchases and facilitated their presentations to our Alaska Council on Emergency Medical Services.

**Plans:** The Section of Community Health and EMS continues to work closely with the Regional EMS Offices, local EMS agencies, and others to fulfill the potential of the Code Blue Project. Currently, we are working directly with several large EMS jurisdictions to determine the best ways to assist them in the implementation of the new ALMR digital communications infrastructure. In addition, we are working with the Regional EMS Offices to update the list of EMS Infrastructure needs and will work directly with Denali Commission staff to complete the project in the time remaining.