

Denali Commission Quarterly Report

01/01/2004 – 03/31/2004

There was considerable activity during this quarter regarding the Emergency Medical Services program and more is anticipated to occur prior to June 30th. Southern Region EMS Council, Inc., Southeast Region EMS Council, Inc., Interior Region EMS Council, Inc., Maniilaq Association and the Norton Sound Health Corporation are all in the process of spending the Code Blue funds allocated to them in 2003. In nearly all cases, equipment on the approved lists has been purchased, is on order, or the agencies are completing a bidding process. Maniilaq Association has experienced temporary delays due to staffing changes but should be able to complete its purchases next quarter.

All of the regional EMS offices and communities with which we have communicated about the Denali Commission contributions to the Code Blue Project have been reminded to provide photographs of items purchased.

Significant work was done by the City of Bethel and Southeast Region EMS Council, Inc., to complete their requests for additional funding for their communications infrastructure projects. These communications projects are designed to dovetail with efforts of the Alaska Land Mobile Radio Project and are expected to increase the reliability and coverage of communications systems in Bethel and Sitka.

The grant to the City of Bethel we are working on serves as an example of good interagency coordination. After submitting an initial proposal for funding for EMS communications infrastructure to the Section of Community Health and EMS, the City of Bethel learned that it had received funds for the same purpose from the Department of Homeland Security. They notified us immediately and we were able to update their request so that they could purchase other infrastructure to compliment that purchased with Homeland Security funds.

The Regional EMS Offices have completed an assessment of essential EMS equipment needs under the Code Blue Program. This labor intensive project has resulted in a number of EMS Infrastructure items being added to the Code Blue database. Staff from the Section of Community Health and EMS are in the process of entering all of the data. Once complete, the database will be used to create an updated list of EMS infrastructure that will be submitted for approval in May.

While the focus of this grant remains EMS communications and patient care infrastructure, the balance between the two has shifted over the past year. Initially, we had proposed purchasing much more EMS communications infrastructure than has proved to be the case. There are several reasons for this. First, our funding for communications consulting has been less available. This has made it difficult to develop accurate and comprehensive proposals for funding some rural EMS communications repeaters. Second, the Alaska Land Mobile Radio (ALMR) Project has evolved significantly during that time and has become the lead agency in developing the infrastructure for emergency communications. As a result, we are focusing our communications infrastructure related efforts on enhancing systems to be more easily integrated into the ALMR system.

We have completed all of the steps necessary within the department to expend funds to help improve the EMS communications systems in Bethel, Sitka, and a number of other small communities. These items will actually be purchased during the next quarter.

The Department of Health and Social Services, the Regional EMS Offices, and the communities benefiting from the Code Blue Infrastructure grants remain deeply grateful to the Denali Commission for its funding.