

# The Page-out

## Glacier County EMS Newsletter

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### Station 2 Update

Just a quick note on the progress on the new station 2. James made a quick trip to Babb on the 21<sup>st</sup> to drop off some materials such as doors and other hardware. The frame is up, and workers are confident that they will have the exterior siding and the roof done before the end of the month.



### Grant Us. . .

We have been active in the grant department in November, and have seven active grants that we have applied for. While we did not get the \$5,000 that was applied for through General Mills for ice/water rescue gear, we have numerous other grants that could provide bicycle helmets as well as other funding sources for special operations equipment. EMS 27 has also applied to the Operation Ranger Program, which is run by Polaris and provides Polaris Rangers free of charge to many public safety agencies. With the terrain in our county, we were able to make a good case of how we could utilize one. Keep your fingers crossed.

### Parade of Lights

This year, help on the float was a bit sparse, and we had to bring in staff from Babb to even have enough staff to drive our vehicles in the parade, but this year's float looked great. Rhonda did a majority of the work, and unfortunately was out-of-town and unable to see her creation roll down Main Street. The theme of this year's float was "The Gift of Life". There were no shortage of lights on it, and it lit up the night well. Thank you Rhonda for all your hard work, and to those who assisted her.

**The EMS Christmas dinner will be Saturday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 1900 at Shenandoah. There is a sign-up on the bulletin board. Adults only.**

Don't forgot the ALS/BLS refresher Dec 7,8,9, 14, 15, 16. Sign up is on the bulletin board.

### Infection Control Update

I know what you're thinking, not more infection control stuff. With MRSA gaining more and more of the national spotlight, and with MRSA claiming the life of a 33 year-old Texas firefighter, I thought it important to discuss infection control again.

We recently switched to pre-moistened disinfectant wipes, and I have seen an improvement with people's decon practices after a call, but we still have some work to do. Vehicles should be cleaned after EACH patient transport. It should focus on the items used for care and items that the patient had direct contact with. It is also recommended that the entire patient compartment be cleaned at least weekly regardless of call volume.

Oftentimes, small items such as blood pressure cuffs and stethoscopes are overlooked. These items have been found to contain multi-drug-resistant organisms (MDRO's) in tests, including the C. diff organism. MRSA is another that is commonly found. You do not need any special disinfectant to kill MRSA, our wipes will do the job. Another MDRO called VRE (vancomycin-resistant enterococcus) has been found to live on surfaces for 5-7 days. This is one of the few that are capable of living outside the body for very long.

A study recently published in the journal *Prehospital Emergency Care* discussed how one department cultured 21 of it's ambulances, and 10 were found to be colonized with MRSA.

We cannot become lax in the area of infection control. I know that sometimes it is the middle of the night, we're tired, in a hurry, or just feeling lazy, but we owe it to ourselves, our patients and our families to practice infection control on **every** call, no exceptions.

### Medicare Proposes Change

Medicare is *considering* a change to it's rule concerning patient signatures in emergent situations. Currently, a signature from the patient or the five alternative signers must be obtained for all claims submitted to Medicare. The proposed change would allow a claim to be submitted for emergent service without a signature as long as the ambulance service maintains the appropriate documentation on file for at least four years.

The practice of writing "patient unable to sign" on the patient signature line is not sufficient today.

Medicare accepts signatures from the following alternatives; legal guardians, a relative receiving the patient's Social Security benefits, a relative or person with power of attorney, healthcare providers not associated with the ambulance service or medical facility not associated with the ambulance service.

Miss an issue? You can find most back issues on [www.glacierems.com](http://www.glacierems.com). Also, check out the holiday safety tips!

We need official department photos of Raylee and Stephanie. Please stop in on a day when 27 is working. You can opt out on having it put on the web site, but we need one on file.

### Standardized ID Cards

You should have found a form in your mailboxes recently that needs to be turned back in to the EMS chief. The Montana Association of Counties, to which Glacier County belongs, is pushing a state-wide standard ID card for county employees statewide. Your official department photos will be used for the photograph. Please turn in your forms ASAP.

## Medical Humor

Here are some more "you might work in EMS if . . ."

- You've ever heard a guy with multiple facial piercings say "do I have to have a shot, I'm afraid of needles".
- You refer to Town Pump, Wendy's, Burger King and Hardees as "the four food groups".
- You no longer need to ask "frequent flyers" their medical history because you have it memorized.
- Your favorite hallucinogenic is exhaustion.
- You've ever believed that a patient was demonically possessed.
- You find yourself diagnosing passersby at the mall based on physical presentation.
- You instinctively reach for the medical gloves before getting out of your POV even when off-duty.

-You have ever shown people MVA photos like others would show off vacation photos.

- Your favorite holiday present has ever been a new stethoscope.

- Galls sends you a Christmas card.

## Safety Corner

Those of you who have taken a transfer to Great Falls or Kalispell know that winter has arrived. Here are some tips from the Montana DOT on winter driving.

- Never pass a snow plow on the right. Some have 8 foot extensions on the right that you may not see.

- Allow 3 times more distance between vehicles than for normal weather.

- Plows travel around 25-30 mph. Use caution and be prepared to encounter them when going around corners.

- Allow for extra travel time. Don't push yourself on icy or slick roads to "make good time", just get back safe.

- Make sure your tires have good tread and are inflated to their recommended pressure.

- Clear all ice and snow from mirrors and windows before driving.



This might hamper this unit's readiness a bit!

## Photo of the Month

## Energy Drinks, Pros and Cons

I think at one point we have all indulged in an energy drink to help get us back to town while on a patient transfer in the wee hours. With all the different benefits they claim, are they true? Here is some general information:

- None have been thoroughly studied or classified by the FDA or had their advertised benefits clinically proven.

- Health Canada has only approved one; Red Bull, as a health product, but only if two or less are consumed per day.

Side effects from energy drinks that have been reported include dizziness, nausea/vomiting, electrolyte disturbances, heart irregularities/dysrhythmias, hypertension, irritability, dehydration and insomnia.

The flagship ingredient of most energy drinks is caffeine, which is a legal stimulant. According to the Mayo Clinic, caffeine in moderate doses (200-300 mg/day) is not harmful. More than 500 mg/day can lead to the reported side effects. When caffeine wears off, it often causes an energy "crash".

Caffeine content of common beverages:

Coffee, 8 oz.	135 mg
Black Tea, 8 oz	40-70 mg
Coca-Cola (can)	35 mg
Red Bull 8.5 oz	80 mg
Full Throttle 16 oz	144 mg

The occasional energy drink may not be harmful, but experts recommend that they not be used regularly and not consume more than one at a time. They also caution that their other claims (such as memory enhancement) are not clinically proven and not FDA approved.

## Department Tidbits

- First Responder Lyle Rutherford has resigned from the department because of other multiple commitments. We are sorry to see you go Lyle.

- We recently passed our state inspection that is required to maintain our service license.

- The insulation that has been stored here is now in Babb and A4 is back in it's home.

- There is an EMT class slated for after the holiday season. If you know of anyone who may be interested, please let them know. We would like to have at least 8 dedicated and motivated students for this class.

- Thank you to all our members who have been pulling extra shifts to help fill the open slots on the schedules, it makes a difference and is greatly appreciated.

- Thank you to Floyd and Stephanie, who took the open shifts on Thanksgiving Day.

- Congratulations to Raylee Thompson, who is expecting her first child with her husband, John. John also works for Glacier County as a dispatcher.

- Rhonda has been working hard decorating the station.

## Medicare Modernization

The Government Accountability Office has recently released a report on Medicare reimbursement for ambulance providers which proves that the cost of caring for Medicare patients is more than the reimbursement paid. This is not news to most EMS services, as many have struggled to pay their operating costs with the meager reimbursement that Medicare pays.

The study, which focused on the years 2001 to 2004, showed that Medicare payments were on average 6% less than the national average cost of providing EMS care to Medicare patients. In rural or "super-rural" areas the reimbursements were 17% less than the cost to the EMS service..

What does this mean for us? This study was requested by Congress as part of the Medicare Modernization Act, Many hope that congress will pass legislation to bring reimbursement rates up, and many EMS services are contacting their senators and representatives to let them know where they stand. If legislation does go through in the future, it would mean better reimbursement, and therefore more revenue for EMS services, including ours.