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2013 EMS Today National Conference

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Last week, JEMS, the Journal of Emergency Medical Services "The Conscience of EMS" conducted a well organized and well run National Conference and Exposition that brought together an estimated 4,000 attendees. Attendees included a wide variety of police, firefighters, rescue workers, paramedics, nurses, and other EMS workers in this noble profession dedicated to helping Americans when they need it most. Their work is sometimes dangerous and heroic. Many are volunteers -- people who work for their fellow Americans without pay and without benefits.

The EMS Conference provided excellent speakers, information, and exhibitions of technologies, products, and services for saving lives and preventing disabilities. One of the many memorable presentations was made by a former California Highway Patrol official, now a risk management expert, Gordon Graham, who has an important message: "Predictable is Preventable."

Transportation safety unfortunately did not have the prominence commensurate with the predictable and preventable magnitude of the problem of nearly 100 crash deaths and 400 serious injuries on an average day.

Federal participation was reduced this year in part because of the sequester and adverse weather that shut down the Federal government on Wednesday resulting in the cancellation of the half day Federal Town Hall Meeting Workshop. Although there was a brief meeting late on Friday with a panel of Federal Officials from the White House and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sponsored by the International Association of EMS Chiefs and EMS Labor Alliance.

Absent were President Obama and VP Biden, both of whom suffered crash deaths in their families. See <http://www.fairwarning.org/2012/09/a-strange-indifference-to-highway-carnage/>

Also absent were the Secretary of Transportation, the NHTSA Administrator, Board members of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the CDC Injury Prevention and Control officials that issue Field Triage Guidelines. Not one auto company (not even GM which is partly owned by the U.S. government) was there. Nor were any telematics service providers such as OnStar there.

Hopefully, next year they will be present since so many people die, or are disabled, each day of crash injuries without the timely, optimal emergency medical care -- for which these officials and organizations have responsibilities to prevent and treat.

Next year we can expect better. Next year is an election year in which this army of life saving troops will be needed more -- so I expect these officials and organizations will be present. Hopefully, they will come with goals, policies, products and services to help these troops -- our angels of mercy -- save more lives and mitigate more injuries.

At the Conference, there was reason to expect significant Federal presence and contribution in view of the recent speech by President Obama when he rightly said:

"So now Republicans in Congress face a simple choice: Are they willing to compromise to protect vital investments in education and health care and national security and all the jobs that depend on them? Or would they rather put hundreds of thousands of jobs and our entire economy at risk just to protect a few special interest tax loopholes that benefit only the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations? That's the choice.

"Are you willing to see a bunch of first responders lose their job because you want to protect some special interest tax loophole? Are you willing to have teachers laid off, or kids not have access to Head Start, or deeper cuts in student loan programs just because you want to protect a special tax interest loophole that the vast majority of Americans don't benefit from? That's the choice. That's the question."

Speech text available at:

<http://www.kwwl.com/story/21242701/2013/02/19/full-text-of-president-obamas-sequester-speech-tuesday>

President Obama was right to express concern for first responders (police, fire/rescue, and EMS) because they are the public's first line Safety Net. First responders can and do make the difference between life and death for many Americans.

Herein I will address just crash deaths and injuries (not the many other injuries and illnesses EMS workers deal with daily).

Historically we are in the 114th year U.S. crash deaths and serious injuries:

- * More than 3.5 million Americans have died of crash injuries in the U.S.
- * An estimated 12 million Americans have suffered serious crash injuries in the U.S.
- * Using current U.S. DOT value of \$6.2 million per life lost, the financial costs would total an estimated \$22 Trillion. See attached DOT Policy.
- * Currently about 100 Americans lose their lives to crash injuries on an average day.

* Currently each day about 56 Americans, more than half of all crash fatalities, die of crash injuries without EMS transport to **any** facility for medical treatment.

So the President is right that to save more Americans first responders need more resources -- not less. First responders also need better policies from the President.

Think of a President with the courage of a John F. Kennedy. JFK challenged the nation to put mankind on the moon and bring them back alive within a decade — using 1960's technology — and we succeeded.

Imagine a President challenging the nation to create a transportation system where people can venture forth and return alive — using 21st century technology.

Safety researchers around the world believe this is a worthy goal that we should aim to achieve in a decade.

In a recent article “3 Steps to Reduce Crash Deaths” I offered three policy steps available to the President that can improve care for crash victims. See my Blog page January 2013.

1. Set a goal to be achieved by the year 2020 of one-hour medevac or less for victims in serious crashes in the U.S. as we have already achieved in Afghanistan. Bring crash victims home alive.
2. Count serious crash injuries and measure their consequences.
3. Assign VP Biden the task -- similar to the one just given on gun violence -- to recommend actions on reducing crash deaths and disabilities.

By 2007, the percentage of fatal crash sites covered by air medical rescue services had increased to 61%. Source:

http://www.adamsairmed.org/pubs/RW_Coverage_Density_Poster_AMTC08.pdf

Maps and data on crash fatality rates by State and air medical coverage areas are at

http://www.adamsairmed.org/public_site.html

In President Obama's first term, more Americans died of crash injuries than died in the Afghanistan, Iraq, and Viet Nam wars **combined**. Question: If the President does not take a leadership role now, will he preside over a greater number of deaths by crash injuries in his second term? Since we appear to be slowly coming out of the Great Recession, we saw crash deaths begin rising in 2012. So it is predictable that Presidential leadership is needed now to prevent the number of crash tragedies in his second term from being worse than in his first term when about 132,250 Americans died.

We can and must do better at protecting motorists from crash violence -- and yes we can.