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## Area EMS personnel hear system updates

By **Jeff Gill**

Daily News Staff Writer

Over the last six weeks, there have been three meetings with emergency medical service (EMS) providers across the county to present the new EMS Transport System with J.C. Blair Memorial Hospital, the digital paging system and the ambulance availability program.

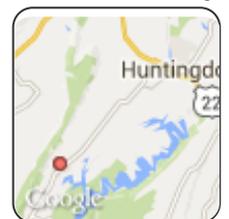
Local businessman Bill Corbin and Huntingdon County 911 dispatcher Joe Thompson, along with Deb Fleagle, pre hospital coordinator for J.C. Blair Memorial Hospital, have been presenting how the three system works and getting feedback from EMS providers.

The final meeting was held Monday night at the Huntingdon Borough building with approximately 30 representatives from ambulance services from across the county present.

Thompson said the meetings have gone well.

“This is the fourth meeting and the EMS providers have been very much involved and have been very responsive,” Thompson said after the meeting. “We should be very proud that we have a unique program with the ambulance availability, the EMS transport program and the digital paging system. What we are seeing is that folks are coming together and working together to bring a

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better service to the community. Bill Corbin has put the work into the design into this to make it work. The EMS providers and their input has really helped in making this system work.”

Fleagle said the new transport program is saving time for both the hospital staff and for the EMS providers. She said gone are the old days of calling ambulance services to see if they are available to take a transport.

“The availability to put the transport into the system and send it out to the EMS service allows the EMS services to see what is needed and if they cannot do it, then someone else can pick it up,” she said. “It also gives the hospital staff the availability to see who is out on calls. It’s streamlined the process. It used to

be phone call after phone call to find a bed and then to find an ambulance to do the transport. This frees up a lot more time.”

In her presentation to the providers, Fleagle explained her role as the pre hospital coordinator and that she is basically the liaison between the EMS providers and the hospital. She said she is willing to help the providers with continuing education classes in the future and is a resource for them when it comes to certain protocols and billing information.

“I am also willing to help you with recruitment and retention,” Fleagle said. “At the beginning of the year, I am planning on trying to come out into the field and find out what your needs are and help with recruiting and retaining members. I am resource at the hospital. Use me. I am your voice at the hospital.”

The one item she did discuss is the emergency department expansion project at the hospital. She said the department is getting a complete new face-lift with the addition of five new rooms and a second nurses station as well.

One of the questions raised about the new expansion project was the entrance area for ambulances. Fleagle said there will be some changes and she will keep all of the ambulance services updated on how they would enter the hospital during the construction project. But, noted when the project is complete, they will still enter the emergency room the same way they do now.

“You will still come in from the bay area, but we will be looking at changing the how you folks are coming in and out of the department,” Fleagle said. “One of the new features will be that there will be an EMS room for you folks, but nothing will change where the patients are brought into the hospital when they are transported by ambulance.”

Corbin explained how the digital paging system works. He said once the pages are sent out to the cellphones, iPads and other mobile devices, a map is provided to show the location of the emergency, what the house looks like and directions to the home.

Charles Mitchell, who serves as an EMT for both [Marklesburg](#) and Orbisonia- Rockhill ambulance services, said the maps are helpful.

“I think it is essential to use, especially for someone like me who is not familiar with the area,” Mitchell said. “I am

not familiar with some of the back roads that we travel, so when a calls goes out, I can bring the map up on my phone with the directions to the house and what the house looks like.”

Huntingdon County Emergency Management Agency director John Cirko said the digital paging system is helpful to his office.

“We can see what units are available and not available and depending on the type of call that we have or whether there is a mass causality, we can pull this up quickly and see what ambulances are available and if we need to go outside the area,” Cirko said. “We can see the fire companies that are available for decontamination if needed, but we know this will help us out as much as it will everyone else.”

Cirko said he thinks this also allows neighboring ambulance service providers to see if more manpower may be needed.

Corbin was pleased with the overall response from the EMS providers.

“All four meetings were good,” Corbin said afterwards. “We had good turnouts for all of the meeting and I think that is what impresses me the most. You hear a lot about the ‘turf wars’ but these people are coming together and working together and that is the most important thing.”

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