

Brian Litza, EMT-Paramedic



E-Licensing

Over the last year, I have written about and discussed the new licensing system to which we are transitioning. Right now as you read this article we have implemented stage one of our transition to the new “*Wisconsin EMS E-Licensing System*” (*E-Licensing*). As expected, we had some technical difficulties in meeting our August 3rd “go live” date. I thought I would take the time to share the rest of the implementation plan so everyone will know what to expect. Detailed and updated information is always available on our web site: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/ems.

Change is not easy and it will, by no means, be easy for our staff or the general public to get used to the new system. However, for those that were around when EMSS went into effect, it was not without its own growing pains. We do believe that once the new system is fully functional we will all benefit from and enjoy the new way of managing licenses and operational plans.

As we began to customize the new system, we realized that some of the functionality that we requested was not as clear as it could have been and both our vendor and our staff found some major work that needed to be completed. Our vision and requirements took a different approach than other states when it came to using the system. Our vendor, ImageTrend, is a quality software company that builds universal platforms that are customizable. The licensing system was initially designed with Maine’s requirements. Soon after, Mississippi came on board. Wisconsin was the third state to join onto the product. Both Maine and Mississippi wanted a closed system that only EMS office staff could access. We, in Wisconsin, wanted individuals and service directors to enjoy the same access that EMSS provided and that we all have come to appreciate.

It was at this juncture that we realized there was significant customization that would be needed. It had always been the intent that both WARDS and *E-Licensing* would work

together. We will get there, but it will take some time. Our first priority was to implement our applications for individuals to apply for a new license or upgrade to a license. We have spent most of our time creating the application forms and assuring that the data import goes as smoothly as possible. We had asked services to update all the information in EMSS prior to the switch. The main reason was to assure that records were as accurate as possible prior to the import from EMSS to *E-Licensing*. No data has yet been shared between *E-Licensing* and WARDS. The next step will be working to get both WARDS and *E-Licensing* to communicate. WARDS will be where the service rosters will reside. The major challenge will be to get official records in *E-Licensing* to match with service-created records in WARDS. This will be no easy task! Services that use any ImageTrend product may assist us by making absolutely certain that individuals on their rosters are set up correctly using the EMS Provider’s exact name as printed on the Wisconsin EMS Provider license, the correct Wisconsin EMS Provider license number, and the EMS Provider’s date of birth and social security number. For those services that do not use an ImageTrend product, do not enter roster information in WARDS at this time. Only update the above information for those who may be on the WARDS roster.

What will happen in the future is when a service goes to manage their roster in WARDS they will only be able to add people that have a valid license in *E-Licensing*. Once this transition takes place, service directors will be able to populate their rosters with completed personnel records that reside in *E-Licensing* rather than needing to fill in all the required fields. If a service director does not have WARDS access for their service, please complete and return the form that was mailed and/or e-mailed. If you did not receive a letter then contact Chuck Happel via e-mail at **Charles.Happel@dhs.wisconsin.gov** for access.

I will stop right here and state that we will be working on the rest of *E-Licensing* concurrently even though it may appear that we are doing things in order. The training center functionality will take another four to six months to develop, so we will speak with the training centers on how we envision the new process to work and entertain their needs. We will then assure that service directors have their needs met and, finally, we still need to work on the license renewal process. Our intent is to be fully operational by March of 2010.

We certainly appreciate your cooperation with this transition and understand the hardships it has posed to many services by not having *E-Licensing* go live as expected. I assure you that we are working hard not to create more problems than we solve. The link to *E-Licensing* is available through our web site at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/ems. Look for the Wisconsin EMS *E-Licensing* Logo and click it to access the login screen.

It is our intent that once the system is fully functional, a new applicant will be able to apply and receive their license generally the same day. As we transition, the process currently requires staff interaction but it will become more automated as we complete the implementation. The other important piece is the credentialing with a local service – what we currently call affiliation.

To be credentialed with a service, the applicant must have a current and active license and then log into their account. Once in the system they will complete and submit a credentialing application. This process takes less than five minutes because most of the information will all ready be pre-populated into the application. The key to getting credentialed (affiliated) with a service in a timely manner rests on the service director and medical director for the service. They will need to assure that their e-mail addresses are accurate and up-to-date in *E-Licensing*. The second is

that both the service director and medical director check their e-mail on a regular basis, if not daily. An applicant that has no criminal background issues and has current training on record may be issued a license the same day. The key will be the service director and medical director being able to verify the application electronically during that same day.

For the individual EMS provider, it is important that you keep your e-mail address current in *E-licensing* as well. We are planning on only communicating with you via e-mail except for the renewal notices that will be mailed bi-annually. For those with limited or no computer access, we are asking that you find a family member, service director, or squad member that can help you get access and maintain your account. Free computers and Internet access is usually available at the public library and some training centers have computers that can be used.

Over the last two weeks we have sent (under separate cover) information on how an EMS Provider can access their *E-Licensing* account. Individuals do not need to immediately go in and verify account information. This can

be done over the next several months. We ask that everyone goes in and verifies their account information no later than January 1, 2010. This will assure that everything is correct when we send out renewal notices in March or April.

IF YOU HAVE A CURRENT LICENSE DO NOT "CREATE A NEW ACCOUNT," IT MAY INACTIVATE YOUR CURRENT LICENSE. Only use the "create a new account" button if you have never held a Wisconsin EMS provider license and/or you have NOT been enrolled in any EMS course in Wisconsin during the past 24 months through the end of this summer. Students enrolling in EMS courses for the first time starting in the fall of 2009, who never held an EMS provider license, will need to set up a new account.

If you have a current WARDS username and password, your *E-Licensing* logon and password are the same. Otherwise you will need to use your license number and the password you were sent in the mail. If you did not receive a letter but have a current valid license, you may attempt a password recovery using your license

number as the username. If we have a correct email address in *E-Licensing*, a new password will be sent to the e-mail address we have on file. If none exists you will need to contact our office or refer to the letter containing your password.

I hope that you found this information valuable. We are in challenging times and change is usually difficult. However, I believe that once we are fully operational we will be able to work more efficiently and have applicants licensed more quickly. Unfortunately, it will not happen overnight. So as always, remember we want to provide efficiency and this will ultimately get EMS providers working and serving the public quicker. After all, we ultimately do it for the patients. ♻️

Brian Litza is the Chief of Emergency Medical Services for the Bureau of Local Health Support and EMS within the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. He is a paramedic and Instructor/Coordinator who has been involved in EMS since 1983. He has held many roles within EMS and fire-based organizations.



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