

Brian Litza, EMT-Paramedic



Let's Not Forget Our Focus

On the first night of an EMT class, the most asked question is “Why do you want to be an EMT?” The answer that almost every student recites is, “because I want to help people.” My name is Brian Litza, and I have recently been given the privilege of being named your Wisconsin EMS Section Chief. The above question was asked of me more than 24 years ago when I first stepped foot into EMT class. It is something I have never forgotten, and as an educator, have always asked of my own EMT students.

I'll come back to this in a moment. As part of my new position, I am pleased to be able to continue the “Straight From The State” column started by Dan Williams several years ago. My main goal for this first article is to give you a feel for who I am and what our plans are for Wisconsin EMS.

I grew up in Greendale, Wisconsin and from my senior year aspired to become a paramedic. I obtained my EMT-Basic from Mankato State University in Mankato, MN. I received my EMT-Intermediate from the Acadian Ambulance Service Training Center in Lafayette, LA, and my Paramedic from Thibodaux Area Technical College in Thibodaux, LA. My CCEMT-P was obtained through UMBC. I became a Louisiana State Certified instructor at the ripe old age of 20 and have been providing EMS education ever since. To that end, I hold all of the standard instructor credentials for EMS.

I have worked for both private and public ambulance services in both rural and urban settings. I have varied experience in many roles within ambulance services. I have been a firefighter and a member of a volunteer fire department. It is this varied EMS background that I feel will benefit me in my new role – I come from the streets and try to take a common sense approach to issues and problems.

The EMS system in Wisconsin is at a crossroads. Many of the administrative rules that we function under are outdated and inconsistent. We have lost funding for several positions in our office due to the federal Prevention Block Grant being cut, and the continuing General Purpose Revenue deficit. We are on the forefront of an electronic data system to help us collect run information and prove that what we do in the field makes a difference. The trauma system has been developed and its registry is also continuing to collect important data and build awareness. There are EMT-Basic refresher changes that may occur in the near future. There are also many other things that we must overcome to keep our EMS system strong.

As the saying goes, there is no “I” in team. I have worked as the Intermediate Coordinator for the past two years. I came to the State EMS office from the private sector and found that the public sector has its own unique culture. The EMS office is staffed by many hard working individuals with a deep history and wide scope of knowledge. We are a regulatory agency, but have found ourselves in more of a consultant role. We are here to help services and individuals work within the

regulations and assure that the EMS system runs as smoothly as possible.

During the last two years, we have made a consolidated effort to improve communications and customer service. However, as stated above, our customer service has begun to be affected by the loss of funding for positions and the increased workloads that have resulted. We hope everyone understands and can be patient with the increased processing times and delays in responding to inquiries. As all the stakeholders come together, it is our hope that we can find a solid funding stream for EMS, and restore and expand our capabilities to help those of you on the front lines of EMS.

So we have now come full circle in this article. You, the individual EMT, are an important part of how EMS operates in Wisconsin. Your service and dedication are greatly appreciated. As humble as we are, not calling attention to ourselves, we do “the job” day in and day out for the only purpose of “wanting to help people.” Now, in this time of transition, I ask that you stay informed and be prepared to support the system we operate. You will be asked by stakeholder groups to assist in efforts to help improve Wisconsin EMS. I hope you will aid your fellow caregivers in their endeavors.

There are many well-respected EMS professionals who have come before me, and many more will follow. The common thread through most of these people – and the reason we have been successful – has been their dedication to those we serve, the patients. Wisconsin is on the leading edge of EMS and it is a privilege for each of us to help those in need. As we continue into the future, it is important that we never forget, that even though tough times and disagreements may occur, the decisions that are made must be made in the best interest of the patients. Let's not forget our focus, the patients. ♻️

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