



Jeb Bush
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary

DATE: November 21, 2005
TO: Medical Directors of Licensed Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Providers
SUBJECT: Distribution of Diazepam Auto Injectors

In keeping with the state's ongoing efforts to protect our first response personnel, the Department of Health's Office of Emergency Operations has distributed Diazepam auto injectors to Florida's emergency medical services providers. Two auto injectors per each advanced life support vehicle have been allocated for the purpose of treating first response personnel in the event of their exposure to a nerve agent.

As I stated in my previous letter to you regarding the nerve agent antidote kits distributed earlier this year, the responsibility of ensuring the availability of proper resources and training for the emergency medical service providers of this state falls under our purview as vigilant medical directors. I am again encouraging you to incorporate appropriate modules into your providers' training plans to ensure emergency personnel's familiarity with use of the Diazepam auto injectors. Fortunately, the method to administer Diazepam through the use of an auto injector is essentially the same as that used to administer the nerve agent antidote included in the Mark I kits. Information included in the existing training resources for the Mark I Antidote Kits, available on the state EMS Internet website, may be used to train emergency personnel on the appropriate method to administer Diazepam via the auto injector.

Please note that your EMS providers must also be informed of the circumstances that would require use of Diazepam for first response personnel. The use of Diazepam may be necessary when confronted with nerve agent related seizures. The diazepam auto injectors are another line of defense to ensure that our first response personnel receive prompt treatment to eliminate the potential for progression of the symptoms associated with that exposure.

The vulnerability of our first response personnel must be considered in an event involving their potential exposure to a nerve agent. Please ensure that the services under your direction follow through with the training of their personnel on use of both the Nerve Agent Antidote Kits and the Diazepam auto injectors. This is an essential component of Florida's preparedness capability and an integral step in protecting our healthcare workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Nelson, DO, MS".

Joe Nelson, DO, MS, FACOEP, FACEP
State EMS Medical Director

JN/vrp

DATE: August 12, 2005

TO: Medical Directors of Licensed Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Providers

SUBJECT: Training for Mark I Nerve Agent Antidote Kits and
Atropine Autoinjectors for Children

One of the most significant components in the state's comprehensive emergency response plan is ensuring that our initial responders receive proper protection and prompt treatment in the event of their exposure to a nerve agent. In order for us to meet our mission to provide Florida's residents and visitors with optimal and immediate emergency health care services, we must address the well-being of our initial responders. To that end, the Department of Health's Office of Emergency Operations recently provided each licensed emergency medical service provider in Florida with Mark I Nerve Agent Antidote Kits to be placed on each Emergency Medical Service (EMS) response vehicle. The kits are to be used exclusively for treating first response personnel in the event of an incident, with any residual antidote kits being available for patients who may have also been exposed.

As part of our obligation to be responsible medical directors to the EMS providers of our state, we must ensure that appropriate and consistent training resources are available and utilized by the personnel under our direction. While the distribution of the antidote kits is a notable step toward protecting the EMS responders, the effort is valueless unless staff are thoroughly educated on the circumstances that would require use of the antidote kit, as well as the appropriate method to administer its contents. To make certain that the antidote kits will serve their purpose in the event of a nerve agent incident, I am recommending that each of you develop and implement a policy to address training of all certified EMS personnel on the proper use and administration of the kits. Several of our colleges have already taken the initiative to develop training resources which are available through the state EMS Internet website at www.fl-ems.com. I encourage you to take advantage of these resources, as well as research the Internet for additional guidance. In particular, New York State has developed comprehensive guidelines that include a sample protocol that could easily be adapted for use.

Also, as part of preparedness efforts targeted toward Florida's pediatric population, some of our first responders have received Atropine Autoinjectors for use in children to include in their pharmacy caches as directed by the Florida Disaster Preparedness Working Group. The state's Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Program has taken the lead in creating a document that offers clear guidance on the proper use of the Atropine Autoinjectors. The document includes a summary of the current FDA dosage recommendations and other helpful information regarding nerve agent exposure in children. To ensure widespread availability, it will be posted on the state's EMS Internet website as well as the EMSC website. It is most important that certified EMS personnel are educated on the use of the autoinjector and clearly understand when it is necessary. A pediatric component must be included in your preparedness training policy.

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Additionally, distribution of Diazepam to all Advanced Life Support (ALS) EMS medical directors will occur in the very near future. Simultaneously, information regarding the administration of Diazepam in conjunction with the antidote kits will be posted on the state EMS Internet site. I encourage you to be proactive in adjusting your training plans to address this additional responsibility.

I am confident that our joint efforts with the Department of Health will result in peace of mind for our first response personnel. It is through sound partnerships and solidarity that we have the opportunity to be successful, even in the face of adversity. Please accept my gratitude for your ongoing commitment to enhance Florida's preparedness capacity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Nelson, DO, MS". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical red line.

Joe Nelson, DO, MS, FACOEP, FACEP
State EMS Medical Director

JN/vrp