



Monroe Livingston Region Program Agency

Division of Prehospital Medicine, University of Rochester


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To: All MLREMS Providers

From: Jeremy T. Cushman, MD, MS, EMT-P 
Regional Medical Director

RJ (Terry) Fairbanks, MD, MS, EMT-P 
REMAC Chair

Date: September 7, 2009

Re: MLREMS Advisory 09-05: Social Networking Sites

The use of internet posting mechanisms, such as blogs, personal websites, social networking sites (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, etc), and others has become common among all age groups. Although EMS providers are cognizant of the need to avoid posting any patient identifiers which would constitute clear HIPAA violations, there are dangers of posting more subtle, de-identified information. Because it is impossible to anticipate who might view a post, such as someone with a connection to a patient, even the most generic or subtle reference to any EMS incident has the possibility of being linked to the actual case, or of being mistakenly linked to a different patient.

Providers are encouraged to refrain from posting any information or photos regarding calls, patients, or situations related to EMS operations, even if posted in a de-identified, generic manner. Items, whether EMS-related or not, that represent unprofessional behavior can reflect poorly on you and the EMS profession, and may become public. These postings could subject you to unintended exposure and consequences, such as if they were used as character references in medical-legal proceedings, job applications, etc.

Lastly, providers should never be engaged in internet posting or blogging while providing patient care.

With any questions, do not hesitate to contact the MLREMS Program Agency via the University of Rochester Division, of Prehospital Medicine.