

St. Louis Area Regional Response System (STARRS) and The Emergency Patient Tracking System (EPTS)

Five years ago under a federal Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) grant for the St. Louis City Fire Department, the city of St. Louis shared a vision of a coordinated regional response to large-scale critical incidents in the bi-state region. The vision has become a reality, thanks to the efforts of volunteers, hardworking civic-minded first responders, health care professionals and innovators from the private sector. Today, the organization, now known as STARRS, has developed a mutual aid agreement among area hospitals and designed an emergency patient tracking system that tracks injured persons from the scene of an emergency to area hospitals.

Key to the success of this program is the leadership of the Mayor's office and the support of Mayor Slay in fostering collaboration among doctors, hospitals, public safety officials, civic and community leaders. The willingness to work with the private sector and utilize their advanced technologies for the public good is the hallmark of this project.

To save lives of victims in the event of a major emergency, first responders in the St. Louis region needed a way to quickly process the status of injured people and get them to proper medical facilities. The team of Nextel, Raytheon and AirClic partnered with the St. Louis Metropolitan Medical Response System to develop a regional mass casualty incident response system—Emergency Patient Tracking System (EPTS). This first-of-its-kind state-of-the-art wireless triage system provides area hospitals, health departments, Missouri National Guard and Missouri State Emergency Management Agency with instant, interoperable, reliable and secure communications in times of need. “The EPTS solution has helped increase the survival rate at the hospitals by providing the medical staff with casualty information before their arrival and by ensuring that any one hospital is not overwhelmed,” said Dr. Jeffrey Lowell, Chief of the St. Louis MMRS.

EPTS allows emergency officials to scan patient identification, collect patient information, store it to a central database and provide it to emergency personnel. In turn, hospital personnel can monitor the situation through EPTS so that they are aware of how many patients are being transferred to their facility. Critical information is sent instantly to a secure website, which can then be dispatched to all others who need to know.

This collaboration is moving forward. STARRS now is responsible for five separate grants and contracts in disaster preparedness and homeland security including a UASI program of \$20million, two contracts from the Health Resources and Services Administration (“HRSA”) to expand the geographic reach of the initiative, and to build a Tier 1 hospital capability in the St. Louis region, a new contract called the City Readiness Initiative from DHE and the CDC to prepare for receipt and distribution of the Strategic National Stockpile and an additional MMRS grant to develop eight new “capability areas”, including preparation for a radiological/nuclear event.

The key benefit of this partnership is the linking of response systems among a variety of public sector organizations:

- First Responders – Fire & EMS
- Emergency Management
- Law Enforcement
- Public Health
- Medical & Mental Health Services

Critical to the success of the partnership is the interest within the community to understand the problem and seek innovative technology solutions. Indeed, the entrepreneurial leadership of private sector companies has built the foundation for preparedness solutions that are affordable and ready to deploy today.

Mayors know, from every citizen they serve, about the need to reduce health care costs and, at the same time, improve the quality of care and the security of our communities. STARRS and EPTS are perfect examples of a partnership that enhances communications, leverages advanced technology and strengthens health care for all citizens in times of need.