

Such a transition could not be implemented instantaneously, because many non-accredited programs still existed. EMS programs are sponsored not only at conventional venues such as colleges, vocational schools and hospitals, but also by fire departments and ambulance services. Many of these programs were totally unfamiliar with the process of accreditation and required both convincing to participate and instruction on how to do it. Another issue was compliance of state licensure regulation with the educational requirement. To accommodate the necessary change in mindset for the EMS community, a deadline of January 1, 2013 (5 years in the future) was set for implementation.

It was challenging to hold together the alliances and convince all parties that the transition could be accomplished by the deadline without disrupting availability of properly qualified EMS professionals. Some states refused to comply, but NREMT and NASEMSO championed the effort nationwide to the EMS community and worked to assure state by state compliance. As 2013 approached, the skeptics were convinced and 100% compliance was achieved.

Politics aside, the task of processing a landslide of accreditation requests fell to the CoAEMSP. With so many programs new to accreditation the CoA scheduled over a dozen workshops to orient EMS educators to the self-study and promote the merits of accreditation. The entire CoAEMSP accreditation process was re-engineered to provide more streamlined and efficient procedures. Their website was redesigned to provide the necessary information, processes were automated and submissions digitized. Even site visit procedures were fine-tuned, requiring retraining of site-visitors.

At the end of 2009 there were about 240 EMS programs accredited by CAAHEP. By the end of 2011 there were about 300, but that was just the tip of the iceberg. During 2012, the CoAEMSP received over 250 self-studies, of these 122 arrived in December. Talk about a last minute rush. Fortunately, the CoA Board had anticipated this situation and approved a Letter of Review (LoR) process in December 2011. NREMT, in turn, was willing to accept an LoR as evidence of good faith progress toward accreditation and agreed to admit students completing those programs for the certification exam. As of this writing, there are 353 EMS programs accredited, 226 holding LoRs and 45 remaining in process. Applications continue to flow in.

We are constantly writing new history. What the CoAEMSP has done over the past few years is history that will shape the future of CAAHEP. I purposely have not mentioned names of individuals involved with the EMS accreditation transition, because there are so many I could not list them all. I do want to mention one. **George Hatch** is Executive Director for the CoAEMSP, who put in many miles of travel around the country helping EMS educators understand the accreditation process. I can imagine the CoAEMSP Board humming to themselves and substituting George's name for "Swamp Fox" in the series' theme song.

"Swamp Fox, Swamp Fox, tail on his hat... nobody knows where the Swamp Fox at..."