

Resolution to Support Addressing the National Drug Shortage Crisis

Offered by:
International Association of Fire Chiefs

Whereas, fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies throughout the United States are reporting experiencing shortages of drugs or pharmaceutical products; and,

Whereas, these shortages are becoming more severe as well as more frequent; and,

Whereas, the number of drug shortages in the United States nearly tripled between 2005 and 2010; and,

Whereas, the causes of drug shortages are many and complex; and,

Whereas, paramedics must administer drugs or pharmaceutical products to patients in the field; and,

Whereas, these drugs are fundamental and essential to emergent patient care; and,

Whereas, without access to the preferred or most clinically appropriate drug treatment, paramedics are forced to use alternatives; and,

Whereas, alternative drugs as a result of shortages may provide a less effective treatment and an increased risk of adverse outcomes; and,

Whereas, some EMS systems may not have alternative medications to treat patients; and,

Whereas, some EMS systems are creating, with their medical directors, “just-in-time” protocols or multiple protocols for similar conditions; and,

Whereas, even with training, using alternative drugs may result in human errors when drawing up medications; and,

Whereas, some fire-based EMS systems are reporting pulling drugs from ALS engine companies to place on ambulances as the shortages worsen; and,

Whereas, some EMS systems are purchasing and using more expensive brand name medications; and,

Whereas, unlike hospitals, EMS systems are unable due to current federal reimbursement policies to pass along the additional cost to patients; and,

Whereas, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) maintains a publicly available website with a list of current and resolved drugs experiencing shortages;

Whereas, Fire and EMS Chiefs and members of the public can report a shortage they are experiencing for any drug or pharmaceutical product(s) through the FDA.

Whereas, drug manufacturers only have to report voluntarily discontinuing a drug or pharmaceutical product if they are the only manufacturer in the U.S.;

Whereas, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on December 15, 2011 calling for strengthening the FDA's ability to respond to the drug shortage crisis; and,

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Congressional Fire Services Institute believes addressing the national drug shortage crisis should be a top priority for the entire fire and emergency service and supports bipartisan legislation to enhance the FDA's ability to respond to drug shortages including requiring notifications to the appropriate federal agencies and the public in advance of voluntarily discontinuing or not being able to meet average historic demand of medically necessary pharmaceutical products purchased by EMS systems.