



# *The CCPS All-Points Bulletin*

March 2005

## *A Message from the Secretary*

There has been a lot of information – and some misinformation – in the news lately about the state’s plan to build an interoperable radio network for North Carolina. Since this is one of our department’s top priorities, I want to make sure our employees understand the department’s position.

The term “interoperable communications” simply means that all emergency responders in the state (law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical services, rescue, and emergency management) will be able to talk to each other on the same radio network, no matter where they are located or whether they are with local, state or federal agencies. North Carolina’s plan to build this network is called VIPER, for **V**oice **I**nteroperability **P**lan for **E**mergency **R**esponders. VIPER will be an 800 MHz (megahertz) network, which is the frequency designated by the Federal Communications Commission as the National Public Safety Band.

The Highway Patrol is mandated by law to maintain a statewide radio system, and is acting as the primary contractor to build VIPER. The Patrol’s current radio system was built in the 1940s. The state will build and maintain the VIPER infrastructure (towers, transmitters, and repeaters) so that local agencies will only have to purchase the handheld radios, saving them millions of dollars in construction costs.

Local agencies will continue to dispatch their own personnel, but when there is an emergency, they will be able to coordinate the response with other agencies on a single radio system. No local government will be forced to use VIPER, but those who do participate will have equal access to a radio network with greater coverage, built-in redundancy, and ample call volume – at a fraction of the cost paid by them.

Interoperable radio communications was first identified as a major need in North Carolina by the 1995 Criminal Justice Information Network (CJIN) Study. Since then, the need has been validated by the Gartner Study in 2002, and by the 9/11 Commission in 2004, which said the inability of emergency responders to talk to each other on their radios is a critical factor in preparing for terrorist attacks.

In North Carolina, the State Emergency Response Commission, the Association of County Commissioners, the League of Municipalities, the Metropolitan Coalition, the Sheriffs’ Association, the CJIN Governing Board, and the Governor’s Crime Commission are just a few of the organizations that have endorsed the VIPER network as a critical public safety need.

We plan to build the network over the next four years. The total cost for the statewide infrastructure is \$189 million, with \$33 million already allocated from local partnerships and federal grant funds. Governor Easley has proposed spending a total of \$33.5 million from state funds in the next two years. We have used Homeland Security funds for VIPER and will do so again in 2005, since it is the top priority for public safety and emergency preparedness in North Carolina.

There are a lot of myths, misconceptions and questions floating around about VIPER. I encourage you to go on our website ([www.nccrimecontrol.org/viper](http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/viper)) and learn about the importance of building this network. Our department’s core mission is public safety, and we must be able to talk to *all* emergency responders in our state if we are going to effectively accomplish that mission. Thank you.

*Bryan E. Beatty*

### *From the Benefits and Safety Office*

Effective April 1, 2005, Medco will become the pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) for the NC Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan (State Health Plan). Medco replaces Caremark/AdvancePCS.

**Q: When does Medco replace Caremark/AdvancePCS as the pharmacy benefit manager and when do I need to start using the new ID card?**

A: Medco replaces Caremark/AdvancePCS effective April 1, 2005, and that is when members should begin using their new ID card. The new ID card will serve as the medical and prescription drug card. The ID cards are being sent from the Claims Processor, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, in a separate mailing than the Medco Welcome Package.

**Q: Whom do I contact if I have questions concerning the Welcome Packet received from Medco?**

A: Members should contact Medco Customer Service at 1-800-336-5933 for any questions they may have concerning the Welcome Packet. The customer service number for Medco is also located on the back of the new ID card.

**Q: When will Medco's Web site be available to State Health Plan Members?**

A: Members may register on the Web site April 1, 2005.

**Q: If my drug is not listed on the Preferred Drug List is it covered?**

A: The Preferred Drug List included in the Welcome Packet is a partial list only. Members should contact Medco Customer Service at 1-800-336-5933 to inquire about a specific drug. When using a drug on the preferred drug list the co-payment will be \$10 for generic, \$25 for a brand without generic or \$35 for a brand with generic for a 34-day supply. If a member chooses to use a drug not on the preferred drug list, the co-payment will be \$40 for each 34-day supply.

**Q: Will I be able to use my current pharmacy with Medco? Am I required to use mail order thru Medco?**

A: All major retail pharmacies participate with Medco as well as the majority of independent/local pharmacies. Members may call Medco customer service at 1-800-336-5933 to inquire about a specific pharmacy. Members do not have to use mail order, this is a convenience offered to members only if they wish to use it.

**Q: Do I need to complete the Health & Medication Questionnaire?**

A: No, members are not required to complete the form. However the information on the form does help Medco protect against potentially harmful drug interactions and is meant to be an added safety benefit to our members.

### *Comings & Goings*

Welcome to our new employees: **Emily Popma**, Fiscal; **Kimberly Greene**, Human Resources; **Bethany Khouri**, CJIN; **Deborah Cooley**, EM; **John Watts**, NCNG; and **Myra Beckers**, **Eugene Golden**, **Lori Hawkins**, and **John Hancock, Jr.**, SHP.

Good luck to our recent retirees: Capt. **Eddie Vuncannon III**, Lt. **S.N. Gunsallus**, Sgt. **J.E. Strickland Jr.**, Trps. **H.C. Crouse III** and **M.E. Graham**, and REII **Jerry Massey**, SHP.

### *Congratulations!*

**Gary Faltinowski** of EM has been promoted from Planning Support Branch Manager to Information and Planning Section Chief. He now will oversee the activities of the Communications Branch, Planning Support Branch, and the Homeland Security Grants Branch.

Chief Deputy Secretary **William Dudley** was honored by the Department of Criminal Justice and Judicial Administration at Saint Augustine's College on March 24<sup>th</sup>. He received an Appreciation Award for his contributions to the development of and assistance to the school's criminal justice department and its students.