



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

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August 13, 2004

UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER
ANNUAL INSPECTION OF VA PHARMACEUTICAL CACHES

1. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Information Letter discusses the annual inspection of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Pharmaceutical Caches by the Emergency Management Strategic Healthcare Group (EMSHG) Area Emergency Managers (AEM).
2. The VA Pharmaceutical Cache Program was conceived in October 2001, as a means for VA to maintain its health care delivery capability in the event of a natural disaster or intentional attack. The program provides a readily available supply of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies to treat veterans, VA staff, and others who may be present at a VA Medical Center in a disaster situation. Caches allow for short-term preservation of the VA health care infrastructure in a disaster situation.
3. The cache program is fully implemented with 143 caches in place. A review guide was written and included in the Office of Inspector General Combined Assessment Program (OIG CAP) process. The OIG CAP audit cycle however, does not review every facility annually. EMSHG has been tasked to accomplish audits of the caches yearly. Emergency Pharmacy Service (EPS) staff presently perform site visits at sites having substantial compliance issues and as requested by local management or a Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) office. The three key parameters of the cache inspection program are:
 - a. Does the facility have a station level policy regarding the activation and utilization of the cache that is consistent with VHA Directive 2002-026, Pharmaceutical Caches in a Weapons of Mass Destruction Event?
 - b. Is the cache stored and secured in a manner consistent with VHA Directive 2002-026?
 - c. Are the cache narcotics integrated into the station monthly narcotic inspection process?
4. Cache inspections are an added responsibility of the EMSHG AEMs. There are thirty-seven EMSHG AEMs located across the Nation, focused on emergency management and planning, who annually perform physical inspections of the caches within their assigned geographic area using standardized criteria. EMSHG AEMs perform this added duty in the context of the overall emergency management plan for the facility, VISN, and VHA. These individuals are not as knowledgeable in pharmacy requirements as a pharmacist, but do provide the necessary

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oversight for the caches, and they have Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) EPS consultants readily available for expert advice.

5. Questions may be directed to either Connie Boatright, R.N., MSN, Acting, Chief Consultant, Emergency Management SHG, at (304) 264-4825, or Wesley D. Robbins, Pharm.D., MBA, Director, VA Emergency Pharmacy Service, at (708) 786-7971.

S/ Arthur S. Hamerschlag for
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Acting Under Secretary for Health

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