

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Emergency
Number Association



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NENA Opposes HMOs and Insurance Companies Screening Emergency 9-1-1 Calls *HMO Response Plans Impede Service Efforts of America's 9-1-1 Systems*

Columbus, Ohio (August 24, 1999)—The National Emergency Number Association (NENA) expresses concern that insurance company intervention in emergency services confuses the public and jeopardizes life-saving efforts of the nation's emergency services personnel.

USA Today reported today ("Who do you call: 9-1-1 or your HMO?") that a Colorado-based HMO firm, Kaiser Permanente, is launching a program in which HMO participants are encouraged or required to dial their insurance company before calling 9-1-1.

"This pilot program, and the larger trend noted in the *USA Today* article, is clearly against the public's interest. 9-1-1 was created to shorten the response times in emergencies. 9-1-1 is widely known as the universal number to call in emergency situations. The American public has invested billions of dollars in developing the nation's 9-1-1 infrastructure and the educational effort that has made 9-1-1 the public asset that it is today," said William H. Hinkle, NENA National President.

"Requiring insurance customers to call a third party before calling 9-1-1 is a confusing message for citizens seeking emergency care and services. Whether life-saving emergency response service is a covered insurance expense is one of the *last* things a citizen should be thinking about in the time of emergency," Hinkle emphasized.

NENA believes that during an emergency, seconds literally can mean the difference between life and death, or between permanent and temporary injury. NENA believes that insurance company involvement in this area effectively places the value of cost savings ahead of the lives and health of the American public—a public that is currently served by a timely response by the appropriate public agencies dispatched by 9-1-1 centers.

"NENA urges policy makers to seriously reconsider this effort to save health care dollars, and suggests that managed care efforts should begin only once the emergency response effort is completed," said Hinkle.

NENA is the only organization dedicated solely to the promotion and implementation of 9-1-1 as America's universal emergency number. NENA's mission is to foster the development and implementation of 9-1-1 as a universal emergency number. NENA has more than 6,600 members, most of whom manage the 4,300 primary 9-1-1 centers that answer and process 9-1-1 calls. As a part of its mission, NENA also develops recommended operating standards and protocol for 9-1-1 services. NENA's international headquarters is located in Columbus, Ohio.

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