**OKAMA AND Oklahoma Emergency Response Systems Stabilization and Improvement Revolving Fund.**

OKAMA is proud to have been instrumental in securing funding for the Oklahoma Emergency Response Systems Stabilization and Improvement Revolving Fund, commonly known and referred to as OERSSIRF.

Governor Brad Henry formed the Governor’s Task Force on EMS Readiness in October 2005. Many of the persons appointed to that Board are past and current Board Members of OKAMA. That Task Force issued interim reports with the final report delivered to the Governor and Legislature leaders in February 2007.

One of the key pieces identified and requested of Oklahoma were Developmental Grants “to encourage the growth of clinically excellent regional EMS systems that operate in a cost-effective manner.” The original discussion by the Task Force was to 1) Identify areas in Oklahoma poorly or under served by available EMS, 2) Create a plan to improve, 3) Arrange support from the citizens in the area served, and 4) Fund the initial EMS and operations until the new system could support itself. The proposal allowed a flexible solution to qualify for the funds, enhancing existing service with a better plan or creating a new system with more support from the community or communities.

This along with other recommendations became the priority of OKAMA and its legislative efforts. OKAMA Members, OEMTA, Legislative champions and our Legislative Liaison, Margaret Erling worked very hard on all of the recommendations. We were successful with several of the recommendations, but as with all years, funding is especially challenging.

In about 2008, Oklahoma adjusted (increased) Tobacco Tax and negotiated a compact with Oklahoma Tribal governments to tax their tobacco sales. The Legislature was charged with allocating the use of the new funds. So many groups and descended on the Capitol that it became harder and harder to get the time of Legislative leaders that would be making the plans for approval by both houses and the Governor. Our Members did what they could, but we were most fortunate to have Margaret. Skillfully, she was able to get the leaders to insist that a portion of the new revenue going to trauma systems was set aside for EMS. These are the funds that eventually became OERSSIRF.

Millions of funds have been awarded to EMS that demonstrated need and innovative improvements for Oklahoma communities. OKAMA takes great pride in being involved, giving a lion’s share of the credit to Margaret Erling for her work and accomplished result. Without the work of OKAMA, its Members and Margaret, its hard to argue if EMS would have ever received funds.