

Guest Commentary

Celebrate EMS Week May 14-20

Excellence in action

By Heather Jarvis
Lakes Region EMS

Emergency Medical Services Week is May 14 through May 20. During this week, we recognize the people who work in the Emergency Medical Services or EMS field. In your area, you can rely on a dedicated and well-educated group of professionals to assist you if you have an emergency situation.

To help celebrate the importance of EMS week, we invite you to learn a little more about who works in EMS and how responders serve your community.

EMS is broken down into four main components. They include police, fire, ambulance and first responders.

Your local law enforcement agency and fire department are owned by the city or county you live in and are funded by local taxes as well as state and federal grants. Multiple sources of funding for these agencies help ensure quality education, equipment and training as well as outstanding service to the communities in which they serve.

Most ambulance services, like Lakes Region EMS, are privately owned and oper-

ated and receive no funding from local, state or federal sources. Lakes Region EMS is a not-for-profit organization overseen by a local board of directors and must adhere to strict financial guidelines. It is the dedication to financial health and responsibility which allows the company to continuously purchase state-of-the-art equipment, hire dedicated and highly trained employees and provide an exceptional quality of service to your community.

When a 911 call is placed for a medical emergency, a dispatch center relays the call to first responder groups. These first responders may be your local fire department, Sheriff's deputies or police officers who respond to the scene and care for a patient until the ambulance arrives. All of these people are first responders and are a vital part of EMS. Their training includes administering oxygen, using special equipment like Automated External Defibrillators and even setting up landing zones for medical helicopters.

Our local first responder agencies include Almelund Fire, Center City Fire, Harris Fire, Shafer-Franconia

Fire, Stacy-Lent Fire, Lakes Area Police, North Branch Police and Chisago County Sheriff. Because these trained responders live and work in the area they serve, they are usually able to get to the scene of an emergency within just a few minutes of the initial 911 call.

As first responder agencies are sent to an emergency, the closest ambulance is also dispatched. In Chisago County, Lakes Region EMS provides Advanced Life Support (ALS) and transport to area hospitals. Lakes Region EMS ambulances are based in Rush City, North Branch and Chisago City.

This distribution allows for a fast response to emergencies in any part of the county. These ALS ambulances are staffed with both an EMT and a Paramedic. In addition to a nationally recognized training course and certification, an EMT for Lakes Region EMS completes additional education to be part of an ALS crew. This can include establishing I.V. sites and administering some medications. A paramedic completes an extremely intensive program over at least two years

before becoming certified and can perform many of the advanced procedures found in emergency departments.

An ALS crew will provide a wide variety of life-saving procedures and medications for everything from chest pain and respiratory distress to trauma and child birth. ALS ambulance crews also routinely transport very critical patients from local hospitals to the larger medical centers in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Education is a large component of what EMS services can offer to their community. Most of the continuous first responder training for area fire and law enforcement agencies is provided by Lakes Region EMS. Initial First Responder and Emergency Medical Technician courses as well as advanced courses for Paramedics and other ALS providers are also offered. Additionally, EMS services like Lakes Region EMS, offer community health and safety courses like CPR, First Aid and child safety seat checks.

To find out more about community health and safety courses, please visit the Lakes Region EMS Web site at www.lrems.com.