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AHS adds more EMS units and crews in Medicine Hat

MEDICINE HAT – Alberta Health Services (AHS) is addressing increasing local ambulance call volumes by adding Emergency Medical Services (EMS) vehicles and personnel.

The additional resources include:

- One basic life support (BLS) ambulance, added last month to the existing complement of five peak-time advanced life support (ALS) ambulances.
- A non-ambulance transfer (NAT) van staffed with two new emergency medical responders (EMRs), to be added next month.
- Six new emergency medical technicians (EMTs), to be added April 1.
- A second paramedic response unit (PRU), added late last year.

These changes will boost the number of local EMS personnel to 36, a 20 per cent increase.

“Since the fall of 2014, we have been working on addressing the increases in ambulance call volumes,” says Sean Chilton, Chief Zone Officer for AHS South Zone.

“By reallocating some current resources, we are able to add resources that will meet peak call volume demands in the community and provide the right level of care for patient needs.”

Local EMS currently responds to about 700 calls per month.

“The additional BLS ambulance and NAT van will be used in Medicine Hat for transporting non-urgent patients between AHS facilities,” said Sandy Halldorson, Executive Director of EMS for the South Zone. “This will allow us to keep more ALS ambulances and crews available to respond to emergency calls in the Medicine Hat area.”

ALS ambulances are able to respond to more complex medical situations with a staff of at least one paramedic who has expanded training and scope of practice and more life-saving equipment on board. ALS personnel have a two-year college diploma and are trained in all EMR and EMT skills but also have training in treatment, including advanced airway management and medication administration.

BLS ambulances are staffed with EMTs or EMRs, who have a standard level of equipment to provide essential medical care for patients. They provide basic patient assessment and treatment, including obtaining vital signs, administering oxygen and splinting extremities.

A PRU is a specially equipped sport-utility vehicle with advanced life support equipment, staffed by a paramedic. A PRU cannot be used to transport patients.

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The NAT van is a specially equipped minivan for transferring medically stable patients between health care facilities for specialist consults, diagnostics and procedures. Two NAT vans are currently based in Brooks to serve the east part of South Zone. There are two other NAT vans in Raymond to serve the west part of the zone.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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