

March 20, 2009

General Background

- Responsibility for governance and administration of EMS will be transferred from municipalities to Alberta Health Services without degradation or gaps in service on April 1, 2009.
- EMS' first priority remains unchanged: providing safe, quality and timely patient care. Patients will continue to receive the same standard of care.
- The new provincial EMS model will improve Albertans' access to emergency medical services, no matter when or where they find themselves in need of emergency care.
- AHS is still in the early stages of transition and much work remains to be done. The initial focus has been to address immediate issues such as governance and contracts. Now that immediate issues are resolved, focus can shift to identify priority initiatives to move toward fully integrating EMS into health services.
- AHS is committed to a people-first approach during the transition of EMS. This means patients and staff are being put first and other aspects (i.e. uniforms, ambulances, branding, buildings etc.) will come later.
- AHS has been working closely with cities and municipalities to ensure a smooth and seamless transition of responsibilities. The hard work and collaboration of the transition project team, providers and municipalities is commendable. Everyone involved has been clearly focused on the best interest of the patient.

Service Provider Contracts

- Service provider contracts have been agreed to with all 74 municipalities and organizations currently providing emergency medical services. Through active engagement and dialogue, providers were given the option of either providing services under contract or transferring service to AHS. (Peace Country Health and Palliser Health Region had previously consolidated as part of the Discovery Project.)
- AHS will assume direct delivery of nine service providers on April 1, 2009, and an additional four service providers between May and September 2009.
- Sixty-one service providers will continue to provide services under contract for the next two years.
- As each service provider has unique challenges and complexities, agreements leave allowances for local conditions and situational variances. For example, the 11 integrated service providers (combined EMS/fire) in Alberta will continue offering integrated services while ensuring the availability of specific EMS resources.

Consolidated Dispatch

- Alberta Health Services will consolidate more than 30 EMS dispatch centres across Alberta to three within the next 18 to 24 months.
- The centres will be located in Peace River, Edmonton and Calgary and serve north, central and south Alberta respectively.
- The Edmonton EMS dispatch centre will be located at the Provincial Flight Coordination Centre. Peace River's location has not been confirmed. Calgary's EMS dispatch services will be contracted to the City of Calgary Public Safety Communications for a three-year term.
- Current providers of EMS dispatch were engaged to determine when it is best to consolidate their services and transition agreements are being worked through with each centre. Full consolidation of dispatch services is expected to be complete by spring 2011. This transition period ensures continuity of services until the new consolidated dispatch centres are fully established and operational.
- Consolidating EMS dispatch ensures the most appropriate resource is being sent to the patient at the most appropriate time. It provides an opportunity to more fully utilize the ambulance fleet; which in turn more fully utilizes staff. This benefits all Albertans.
- Familiarity with destination location is NOT a concern. Technology empowers dispatch to accurately direct ambulances to their destination so that familiarity with the area is not required. Remote destination dispatch has already been successfully implemented in some areas of the province. For example, Rocky Mountain House currently dispatches Fort Saskatchewan.
- AHS is working towards a boundary-less province that puts the best interest of the patient first and foremost. Resources will be balanced with local community needs, overall system needs, and staff.
- Consolidation of EMS dispatch services will result in decreased call volumes for current dispatch operators. This may result in some localized dispatch operator job loss. There will be job opportunities in Peace River, Edmonton and Calgary.