

South County Emergency Medical Services

Monthly Update

December 15, 2014

As we rapidly approach winter here in New England the department's call volume has decreased slightly as anticipated. With the mild decrease in 911 calls, South County EMS staff has been able to expand our involvement in the community through outreach and education programs.

At the beginning of November a large group of Deerfield Elementary School students and respective staff were treated to a very special show-and-tell. After a book reading to the students and question time inside the classroom, the students were delighted to be taken outside to see an ambulance in person! The students had a blast getting to play in and around an emergency vehicle, as did the teachers who accompanied them. These types of opportunities are important for South County EMS as they not only increase awareness of what EMS personnel do, but also to expose kids to potentially unnerving environments in a safe and non-scary manner. South County EMS staff are quick to share stories of children who remained calm as they sought emergency help for family members and later cited their exposure to public safety personnel before the emergency as giving them the knowledge and courage to do what they did.



Speaking of community outreach, surely we've all heard mention of the new high-speed rail traffic that will be travelling through Deerfield and Whately. Public safety professionals from all disciplines have been meeting with both railroad personnel as well as local residents to determine the best way to both protect people from the new rail traffic as well as respond to any emergency we hope never occurs. First and foremost, we can only be successful in our safety campaigns if everyone participates, therefore it is important that everyone minds the railroad tracks, take trains seriously, and make sure our loved ones are also aware of the dangers.

In November South County EMS increased the protection we provide to the community by scheduling staff for a second ambulance. With the primary ambulance staffed at the Paramedic level 24/7, the second ambulance is now being crewed with the existing dedicated call staff members from the three towns. This scheduled staff assures that if the first ambulance is already committed to another call, or is in need of additional responders, there is a second set of highly trained personnel at the ready to respond at a moment's notice. Staffing of this second ambulance has proven to be difficult at times, as it relies on the scheduling of EMTs in town around their normal lives and commitments, but forward progress is being made, and the willingness of personnel to step up to the challenge is commendable.

Last month South County EMS responded to 80 calls for service resulting in 50 patient transports to the hospital. The average response time, measured from when the ambulance is initially dispatched to its arrival at the patient's door, has dropped below 8 minutes. This is incredibly remarkable for two important reasons. First, it means that our regional service matches or bests the target response times for larger, well established urban EMS agencies throughout the county, despite the long travel times associated with the rural areas we serve. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, it marks an incredible improvement of service for our three towns. Before regionalization the data available showed that on average people would generally wait at a minimum 12 minutes for an ambulance, and then another 6 minutes or more for paramedics to arrive. Now as a result of regionalization, our full time Paramedic service regularly delivers Advanced Life Support

(ALS) to patients 250% quicker. Frankly put, we've brought our communities out from the ranks some of the most underserved in the Commonwealth, to the level of some of the best. We should all be proud of what we've accomplished.

As the weather gets colder, and the ice and snow gets thicker, I want to remind everyone to be careful driving and walking in this weather, and to take precautions to prevent slips and falls. Furthermore, many people suffer heart attacks in the winter time from the physical exertion associated with shoveling and clearing snow, so please be mindful of your health, and never hesitate to call for help at the first suggestion of a medical emergency. Stay safe, and Happy Holidays.



Statistics:

For the first four months of operation (July - November), South County EMS responded to 423 calls.

Total Runs:	423
Transports:	303
ALS:	171
BLS:	132
Refusals:	99
Others:	20
Deerfield:	215
Sunderland:	113
Whately:	58
Greenfield:	23
Turners:	4
Conway:	3
Amherst:	4
Hatfield:	2
Ashfield:	1

Average response time (from dispatch to arrival on scene) is **7:57**.

Respectfully,

Chief Zachary Smith, Paramedic
South County EMS
8 Conway Street
South Deerfield, MA 01373
Phone: 413.665.1400 ext 120
ZSmith@town.Deerfield.MA.us