



# F-M AMBULANCE SERVICE

# VITAL SIGNS



November 2006

Compassion, Excellence, Community Service

## F-M Ambulance Holds Small Scale MCI Drill

On Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup> F-M Ambulance held a drill for team members involved in the MCI team. A scenario was created for the team and they had to set up a staging area, appoint an incident commander and triage about 20 patients. Holding MCI drills helps employees practice their skills in case a real major incident would occur in our area.



(Above) Sondra and Justin work on triaging.  
(Below) The MCI team meets after the incident.

## F-M Ambulance Honored as Hometown Heroes

Unicel, a local cell phone provider, nominated F-M Ambulance as their hometown hero in October.



George Gerhardt and Marcel Sim represented F-M Ambulance at the Hometown Hero celebration on Friday October 6<sup>th</sup> at Unicel. George did a live interview with a local radio station and took pictures with the store manager. Both George and Marcel enjoyed the honor and talking to participants in the celebration!



## Did You Know...

- The human heart creates enough pressure when it pumps out to the body to squirt blood 30 feet.
- The strongest muscle in the body is the tongue.
- Right-handed people live, on average, nine years longer than left-handed people.

# The Clinical Corner

By Wade Mitzel, Clinical Coordinator

## Does EMD *really* make a difference in patient care?

### The Challenge

Does Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) *really* make a difference in patient care? That was a question posed to me by a dispatcher in our facility. "Of course", my answer was "absolutely, it makes a difference"! As we began to debate the merits of EMD further, she stated she understood that Dispatch Life Support does help the caller and give live saving help. "But...." she inquired further, "what about all the other calls? Does it really make any difference on how the patient does when the patient's life isn't in immediate danger? Could I prove it made a difference in our area and not some big metropolitan area?" So I set out to answer the question.

### The Study

As the Clinical Supervisor for F-M Ambulance, it is my job to look at patient outcomes and determine the best protocols, procedures, and equipment for our service. I thought the question asked by our dispatcher was a good opportunity to investigate the question, "Does EMD *really* make a difference?"

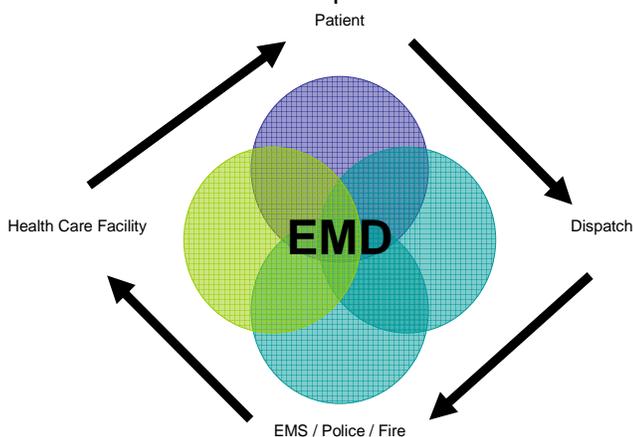
In our primary service area, we have 2 major hospitals. I was able to obtain patient outcome data from one of the facilities and track each patient from the time they called 911 until the time of discharge. I worked with the hospital's trauma committee and decided to look at patients that were involved in major and minor trauma injuries/accidents.

I took the data and compared the EMD codes that were dispatched by the Dispatch Center with the Injury Severity Scores that were assigned by the hospital. The Injury Severity Score (ISS) is an anatomical scoring system that provides an overall score for patients with multiple injuries. The ISS score takes values from 0 to 75. The higher the ISS score equates to a higher level of patient injuries. The ISS score is virtually the only anatomical scoring system in use and correlates linearly with mortality, morbidity, hospital stay and other measures of severity.

### Preliminary Results

The most important outcome from this small study is that the information has really helped change a perception held by our dispatch team. Using EMD protocols, dispatchers really can make a difference in the community and people's lives. Even though dispatchers are taught from the beginning that they have an impact throughout the healthcare system, their perception often mimics the chart below. They tend to believe they really don't affect much more than the type of ambulance response of emergent or non-emergent. Without following our patients and gathering the data, it was difficult to see how using the protocols give the best and most specific response to each caller and emergency.

The study has been able to show that the chart below is a more accurate picture of EMD touches each part of the health care system. Based on the information from this study, more work is going to be done to look at how the EMD protocols can have more of a positive outcome for the people we serve in our community.



### Conclusion

The communications centers do make a difference using the Medical Protocol Dispatch System. There is a direct correlation between the code they give and how the patient does throughout the health care system. EMD touches every link in the Chain of Survival and gives each patient the best opportunity for a good medical outcome. After showing the dispatcher this information, she decided her job **REALLY** does make a difference and that EMD works!

# F-M Ambulance Fall Citizens Academy

F-M Ambulance wrapped up its second session of the Citizens Academy on Wednesday November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The Citizen's EMS Academy is a program that offers a hands-on opportunity for community members to learn what F-M Ambulance paramedics and EMT's do every day. It also educates participants about F-M Ambulance Service and emergency medical services, along with teaching skills that they will be able to use in actual emergencies. Participants have the opportunity to ride along with paramedics and EMTs and go on actual emergency calls.

The academy focuses on hands-on training, showing and teaching the skills that an ambulance crew may use. Participants get to practice starting IV's, intubations, defibrillation, reading heart rhythms, and doing a full "code" on our SIMMAN manikin.

Taking part in the fall Academy were Tracey Braeger, Connie Brewer, Kathy Carbno, Mark Dordahl, Susan Geigle, Kim Herman, Sherry Johnson, Vicki Kariuki, Mike Morken, Howard Scheuring and Deborah Schumacher. Mike Morken from KXJB did a special on this session of the Citizen's Academy; the special was aired on Wednesday nights for four weeks in October and November. The next Citizen's EMS Academy will take place in the spring of 2007. If you know anyone who is interested in being a part of the Citizen's EMS Academy, please have them check our website, [www.fmambulance.com](http://www.fmambulance.com).



Participants in the Citizens Academy practice their CPR skills



Working together to intubate (putting a tube in the patient's throat to help them breathe)



Everyone had fun trying out the SWAT medic equipment and gear



Trying to start IV's was fun (they didn't try to start them on each other though!)



Rick Cameron shows everyone what's in the Major Incident Response vehicle



The Combitube is a basic skills that everyone found pretty easy to do

## Did You Know...

- If you yelled for 8 years, 7 months and 6 days you would have produced enough sound energy to heat one cup of coffee.
- The flea can jump 350 times its body length. It's like a human jumping the length of a football field.
- Elephants are the only animals that cannot jump.

## Senior Ambulance Academy

On Tuesday September 19<sup>th</sup> F-M Ambulance Service held a Senior Ambulance Academy from 9:00 – 12:00. Fifteen seniors from the community enjoyed attending the academy and learning about F-M Ambulance, CPR, AED use, starting IV's, and lifting and moving patients. The Senior Ambulance Academy was held in conjunction with the local Triad group and may become a yearly event in the future!

## Roger Maris Fun Run/Walk

**Fall Challenge:** The Wellness Committee invited all F-M Ambulance employees to take part in the Fall Challenge! The wellness committee challenged each shift and department to get out and participate in the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Roger Maris Cancer Center Home Run/Walk 2006 on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Participants could do either the 2 mile fun run/walk or challenge themselves to the 10K run.



Wade Mitzel participated in the 10K run

The traveling trophy went to the ladies in the customer service department for their participation in Roger Maris Home Run/Walk 2006. The customer service department has been working hard to motivate each other to work out regularly. Many of them have seen large gains in their fitness levels. They also have plans to do the 5K in the Fargo Marathon this spring. They are truly an inspiration to the rest of us and are an example that everyone can be healthier!



F-M Ambulance customer service team with their trophy

The trophy that the customer service department won is located in the display case in the entryway of F-M Ambulance.

## Did You Know...

F-M Ambulance does almost 11,000 calls every year!

## Winter Is Here!

It's that time of year again when the colder weather brings along with it snow and ice. Unfortunately, during the nice summer months, many people seem to forget how to drive on the snow and ice that comes with winter! Here are some winter driving tips:

- Let your engine warm up while you clear off any snow or ice on your car
- Remember to clear snow off of the front and rear lights and all windows
- Check weather reports with the State Highway Department before leaving for trips
- Carry a car safety kit – this should include blankets, matches, candles, high energy dry foods, a flashlight with spare batteries, a first aid kit, map, ice scraper, flares, tow and battery jumping cables, folding shovel, a bag of sand, winter gloves, cell phone, and an emergency HELP sign that you can put in the back window if you need help
- Try not to travel if blizzard conditions are expected
- Decelerate well in advance of a stopping point or turn
- Bridges and overpasses freeze quickly, be careful on these surfaces
- Always keep your gas tank at least half full in case you get stuck somewhere
- Make sure your windshield wipers are in good shape and work well
- Allow extra time to get places when weather is not perfect
- Always wear your seatbelt – this could save your life

## F-M Ambulance and Triad

F-M Ambulance has been actively involved in Triad for many years. Triad is a group of seniors that works with local law enforcement agencies and other agencies interested in the health and well-being of seniors in our community. Triad's goal is to reduce crime against the elderly and to reduce the unwarranted fear of crime that seniors often experience.



F-M Ambulance plays an active role in Triad activities by hosting Senior Ambulance Academies and also speaking and having display booths at most Senior Academies that are held in the area. The local Triad group meets monthly at F-M Ambulance. If you or anyone you know is interested in joining Triad, please have them contact the Cass County Sheriff's Office at 241-5800 or F-M Ambulance.

# F-M Ambulance Wellness Committee

## October:

“Ready, hut!” People were running everywhere on Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup> when approximately 20 employees and students from F-M Ambulance got together in Mickelson Park in north Fargo for a game of flag football. Everyone had a blast and agreed that we would have to have a fall flag football game every fall.



The “Yellow” team



The “Blue” team

## November:

On Wednesday November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 F-M employees planned to take on the F-M Ambulance paramedic students in a game of dodgeball. The paramedic students only had two students show up for the game (they must have been scared of losing). Teams were split up, and three games of dodgeball were played. After the dodgeball game was done most people stuck around to play some kickball. Everyone had a great time playing both games!



Everyone warms up for the dodgeball game.



Mike and Don wait for someone to throw at.

## Upcoming Wellness Committee Events:

December 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2006	Field Hockey or Volleyball	Oak Grove	7:00 PM
January (Date to be determined)	Curling	Fargo Curling Club	TBA

For more information or to sign up for any of the Wellness Committee events, please check the bulletin board in the kitchen. If you are interested in joining the Wellness Committee, please talk to Don Martin – everyone is welcome!

# Mobile Incident Command Post

By Marcel Sim, Field Supervisor

The newly completed mobile command post made its debut at the Cass Fargo Emergency planning committee meeting on October 30, 2006 at F-M Ambulance. The vehicle was exhibited and a demonstration was done by F-M's leadership team.



The vehicle is available to respond to any MCI or potential MCI in the regional area. The vehicle can be utilized by Fire Departments, Police Departments and EMS as a command post. Its capabilities include computer usage hook-ups, cell phone connections, marker boards for tactics planning, LED and fluorescent lighting, and two hard wired generators for continuous power. It also has shore-line connection to power lights or equipment inside the vehicle, a charging system to keep the batteries inside the generator box charged, front and rear radios and driver and passenger side large windows for viewing the scene that open at the bottom. The command post has plenty of seating for incident commanders in a unified command structure, rubberized flooring for easy cleaning, large counter tops for strategic planning, and front and rear heat and air conditioning.

F-M ambulance is planning to install a code 3 light bar and a flat screen TV for media monitoring/updates. Everyone at F-M Ambulance is very excited about this new addition to our fleet and is anxious to utilize it in our community.

## MCI Tabletop Exercises

By Don Martin, NREMT-P

F-M Ambulance Disaster Committee is part of a regional response team for the state of North Dakota. The state has currently four regions with four main response teams based out of Fargo, Bismarck, Minot and Grand Forks. The teams will be made up of volunteer personnel who have been trained specifically on the Incident Command System and the North Dakota response plan.

Since July 2006, the Disaster Committee has been training with other key personnel from around the state as well training at regional state conferences. The committee has been training with a table top that was designed to be a generic model of a city that can be used for any type of disaster or MCI.

The table top exercises are run "as true to life" and as realistic as possible. To date, the committee has trained two regions and is waiting for the remaining regions to schedule or place their requests for training. Responses from the people who attend the training sessions has been good. Most are requesting additional or follow up training. But more importantly, the training is prompting the responders to ask important questions of each other and their squads as to what they would do in the event of an MCI happening in their areas of response.

# The Rural Roundup

By Bob Klein, Liaison Coordinator

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Greetings from Bob Klein, a.k.a. "Farmer Bob"

I have been at my new job now for the past six months and I am starting to get in the groove, so to speak. I am starting to get a handle on all of the training and education throughout the counties. I would like to take the time to thank all of the liaisons who have helped in providing this training to the ambulance services and rescue squads.

We were able to set up two landing zone classes with Meritcare Lifelight in October. One was hosted in Casselton on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the other class was in Wolverton on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Due to the weather, the helicopter could not fly and land in Casselton but was able to fly and land in Wolverton the following night. These classes are always a lot of fun and also provide very important training on how to help with landing the helicopter. A big thank you to Lifelight for being able to provide this training in Cass and Clay counties.

It's refresher time for all of the First Responders, EMT'S as well as the Paramedics in the area so it can be very busy. We have several refreshers and initial classes that have been set up for this fall and the spring.

We have also been very busy trying to get all the squads and ambulance services in compliance with NIMS (National Incident Management System). By the time you receive this writing most of the squads and services should have had the NIMS 700. The next mandated course is the ICS-100 which all First Responders will be required to complete.

On November 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> I went to McClusky, ND, which is about 55 miles north of Bismarck (see pictures below). I taught a course called Sick / Not Sick by AAOS to the McClusky ambulance service. They also received their initial Combitube training as well as the NIMS 700/ START Triage. This was a lot of fun and I will be going back in April to teach Basic EKG Interpretation.

If you have any questions about anything, feel free to contact me at anytime. Until we meet again, have a nice warm winter!

"Farmer Bob"



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## Journey to Excellence

By Mike Hall, Executive Director

F-M Ambulance has always held a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement. The phrase "raising the bar on ourselves" is common and often stated.

The bar was recently raised to a new height as F-M Ambulance Service announced the "Journey to Excellence". This journey will utilize the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Program Criteria. This process creates cutting edge standards and uses continuous quality improvement, and was established in 1988 by Congress through a public-private partnership. Organizations may elect to apply for recognition from the program, which would include an application and a site review. The President of the United States awards a very small number of organizations the Baldrige Award each year.

The F-M Ambulance journey begins with a strategic plan that includes all of the areas that are part of the criteria. F-M Ambulance Service recently began the process of updating our strategic plan to meet this criterion.

The journey is a long range version culminating in an application in 2009. The most important component of this journey is the actual journey. It will take the high level of service provided by F-M Ambulance to the ultimate level. This journey will result in a service that is cutting edge and a leader in Emergency Medical Services.

## EMEC Offers New Classes

The Emergency Medical Education Department at F-M Ambulance is offering two new classes. A basic rhythm interpretation class and the RN-to-EMT class will both be held in February.

The basic rhythm interpretation class is designed to help healthcare providers feel comfortable and confident with the essential elements of rhythm interpretation and recognition of acute coronary syndrome patients. This class is geared towards nurses, paramedics or EMT-Basics.

Most cardiac deaths are the result of fatal arrhythmias. Interpretation of ECG's is a skill that most health care professionals struggle with and even small delays can be detrimental to the patient. Many patients present with non-cardiac symptoms but require ECG monitoring and cardiac treatments. Anyone that places patients on a cardiac monitor or gives cardiac medications should feel comfortable with applying a cardiac monitor, reading basic rhythms and knowing how to treat basic cardiac conditions. Unfortunately, if people don't use this skill frequently they lose some of their familiarity.

The basic rhythm interpretation class starts with a review of cardiac anatomy and physiology. Participants then discuss and practice ECG interpretation. Everything is put together at the end of class with practice on SIMMAN – performing basic rhythm interpretation, understanding cardiac construction and reading and treating cardiac conditions.

These classes can be customized to meet your facility's needs and your staff's experience level. The class is approved for 4 hours of CNE-NET credit.

The RN-to-EMT class will also be held at F-M Ambulance in February. The RN to EMT course is designed for the RN who has extensive emergency medicine or critical/intensive care experience who is interested in becoming a nationally registered EMT-Basic. The course is an intensive 24-hour course that will supplement previous emergency medical knowledge. This course is comprised of hands-on practical skills plus a limited amount of lecture.

The State of North Dakota, along with the North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association has identified a looming crisis in the number of volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians throughout North Dakota. Several steps are being taken in order to increase the number of EMTs in North Dakota in order to help smaller rural communities cover emergency medical situations. Many RN's are already living in rural communities but are not properly trained in EMS operations and job specific skills like applying backboards and staying safe on the scene of an accident. They are truly an untapped resource. This course is being offered to Registered Nurses with the goal of preparing them to take the National Registry of EMTs Basic written and practical exams. This class is approved for 21.5 hours of CNE-NET credit.

For more information on either of these classes or many others, please call our education department at (701) 364-1750 or check the F-M Ambulance website, [www.fmambulance.com](http://www.fmambulance.com).

## F-M Ambulance Helps Keep Community Safe

F-M Ambulance is an active member of two local groups that help keep our community safe.

The Safe Communities Coalition of the Red River Valley is a nonprofit organization devoted to traffic safety and limiting youth access to alcohol. Safe Communities members include medical professionals, law enforcement personnel, businesses, concerned citizens and nonprofit groups.



F-M Ambulance has been an active part in the Safe Communities Coalition for a number of years, and has one seat on the executive committee this year.

The Safe Kids Coalition is a network of organizations whose mission is to prevent accidental childhood injury, a leading killer of children 14 and under. The Safe Kids Fargo Moorhead mission is to reduce and prevent accidental injuries to children by creating and supporting child safe communities through educating families and children, providing safety devices, and advocating for public policy change.



F-M Ambulance has been an active member of Safe Kids for many years. F-M Ambulance and Safe Kids work together to offer car seat checks at F-M Ambulance Service on the third Thursday of every month. Statistically, four out of five car seats are installed incorrectly. In this area and nation-wide the most common car seat misuse is not getting the seat tight enough in the vehicle. Other misuses include having loose harnesses, not routing the harnesses correctly and improperly using the harness clip and locking clip. At the car seat check events, trained technicians are available to assist parents and caregivers with using their car seats correctly. The events are free and open to the public. Space is limited and appointments are required. Please call (701) 234-5570 for an appointment.

## Go Red for Women

The American Heart Association is once again launching their "Go Red for Women" public awareness campaign. This campaign is aimed at making people aware of the fact that heart disease is the #1 killer of American women. Cardiovascular diseases claim the lives of more than half a million females annually, and half of those are under age 65. Less than 10% of women recognize heart disease as their leading cause of death.



Locally, the Go Red for Women Event will be held on Wednesday February 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM at the Holiday Inn. For ticket information or more information on heart disease, please call Kristi at (701) 364-1759.

# Dashboards – Not Just In Your Ambulance

By Todd Hockert, Administrative Manager

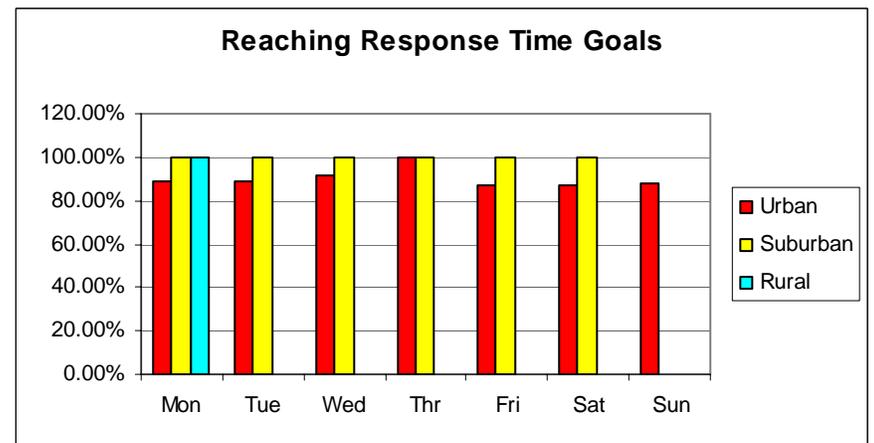
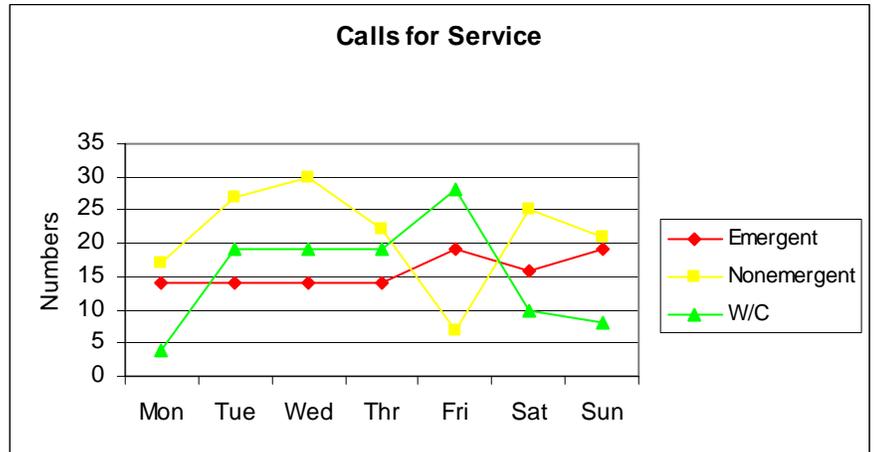
Dashboards are a wonderful simple tool to use on a regular basis to monitor critical areas of your business. F-M Ambulance uses dashboards to monitor response times, late responses and days in account receivables and other areas. Dashboards give you a snap shot of how you are performing.

In the first example to the right, the Calls for Service tracks one week of calls broken out as emergent, non-emergent and wheelchairs. We can monitor trends for the week or compare them to a benchmark or goal.

In the second example we monitor daily response time goals. Because we use different response time criteria for the three areas – urban, suburban and rural – we monitor them separately.

Dashboards are not complicated and can be put together quickly using any spreadsheet program that creates graphs. The hardest part about creating the dashboard is collecting the data. Whether you are able to extract data from a computer database or count manually you can put the data in a format that will allow you to transform it into a dashboard.

All of our dashboards are sent out to the leadership team and posted for team members to review every Monday for the preceding week. We use them to monitor our progress on changes we may have implemented and to make sure we maintain a high level of service to our customers and communities.



## Ready Wheels Has Moved

The headquarters for F-M Ambulance Ready Wheels has been moved to our Fiechtner Drive location – 3148 Fiechtner Drive in Fargo (left). All Ready Wheels vans are housed at that location, and Ready Wheels drivers report to that location for the start of their workday now. They are still dispatched through F-M Ambulance. Fiechtner Drive is also the home of Merigen Medical, a division of F-M Ambulance that sells supplies such as first aid kits, AED's and other EMS equipment.



We hope that you have enjoyed this edition of "Vital Signs", a quarterly on-line newsletter distributed by F-M Ambulance.

If you have any ideas, questions, or comments about "Vital Signs", please contact Kristi at (701) 364-1759, or email [kristi.rasmussen@fmambulance.com](mailto:kristi.rasmussen@fmambulance.com).