

Alberta Beach Village Office

cc: Council

From: david.ives@firerescueinternational.net
Sent: February 19, 2024 12:28 PM
To: david.ives@firerescueinternational.net
Subject: FW: Paper on Enriched Medical Co-Response
Attachments: Enriched Medical Response - Member Communities Pre-Release .pdf

My email was glitching. Therefore, I am re-sending.

Please feel free to share this document with the balance of your council and ratepayers.

Happy Family Day!

FC David Ives

From: david.ives@firerescueinternational.net <david.ives@firerescueinternational.net>
Sent: February 17, 2024 12:55 PM
To: david.ives@firerescueinternational.net
Subject: Paper on Enriched Medical Co-Response

Member Communities,

Please find attached the final draft version of our paper detailing exactly what enriched medical co-response means. This paper should help you understand that the level of service enjoyed by our ten-member communities surpasses anything provided within our region or even that of the five additional counties surrounding our area. Additionally, we hope this paper will assist you when explaining to your ratepayers what it means to have enriched medical co-response.



Enriched Medical Response: Evidence-Based

Support and Implications



Fire Rescue International

Operating as Onoway Regional Fire Services

February 10, 2024

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Enriched Medical Response: Evidence-Based Support and Implications

Enriched Medical Response

In an age where a holistic approach to emergency preparedness and response have become an integral part of our daily lives, the role of first responders, particularly those affiliated with Fire Rescue International (FRI), has evolved beyond the traditional scope of firefighting. This paper delves into the multifaceted nature of FRI, highlighting not only its cadre of firefighters, trained and certified to the stringent standards of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), but also its comprehensive approach to pre-hospital medical care. With a significant portion of emergency calls being medical—ranging from minor ailments to life-threatening conditions like heart attacks, strokes, and traumatic injuries— Fire Service Providers are expected to adapt to meet these challenges head-on, and FRI has.

This exploration will unfold the concept of enriched medical response, elucidating the critical aspects of dispatch prioritization, from minor to critical situations. It will examine the nuanced decision-making process behind the dispatch to specific calls, decode the meanings behind triage assignments, and shed light on the rigorous certification processes required for members to respond to these medical emergencies effectively. Furthermore, it will detail the ongoing education governance mandated by the Alberta College of Paramedics (ACP) for



maintaining an Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) level of care. By unpacking these layers, this paper aims to illustrate how FRI's scope of care profoundly benefits the community, positioning itself as more than just a fire department— but also as a model for comprehensive emergency response and care that our stakeholders can have confidence in.

Enriched medical response is a critical aspect of FRI and in turn has been enshrined in their core municipal offering through the Onoway Regional Fire Services (ORFS). Operating at the EMR level, FRI stands out in our industry by responding to an extensive range of over 1400 different call types. This comprehensive approach sets them apart from traditional fire service providers and sets FRI as a leader among neighboring fire departments. For reference, the closest peer organization in the region handles just 550 different service level call types and deploys mostly standard first aiders. Notably, FRI also responds to time-dependent calls where the EMS is 15 or more minutes away from a scene. The emphasis on inclusivity in responding to various emergencies positions FRI as a versatile and dependable force in emergency medical services.

One notable distinction in FRI's enriched medical response strategy is our commitment to addressing a broad spectrum of medical issues. Unlike many peer departments that may exclude specific call types (for various reasons, including cost, staffing, training, etc.), FRI does not shy away from any challenge and instead invests in its personnel and equipment to have both the breadth and depth to do the job, no matter the job. For instance, FRI responds to chest pain, heart problems, stroke and breathing difficulties, recognizing the significance of all medical emergencies.



This all-encompassing approach ensures that the communities served by FRI receive optimal emergency medical care, regardless of the nature or severity of the incident. A department's ability to exercise this holistic approach requires the effective and consistent application of call prioritization protocols. The prioritization of calls based on severity further exemplifies the enriched medical response provided by FRI. Based on responses, the caller will fall into one of six internationally standardized and industry recognized priority categories: Echo (emergent and immediately life-threatening), Delta (emergent and potentially life-threatening), Charlie (urgent and potentially life-threatening), Bravo (non-urgent, potentially serious with no immediate threat to life), Alpha and Omega, both which are non-urgent (Fitz-Gerald, 2023). Categorizing calls demonstrates a greater understanding of the urgency and severity associated with each call type. By responding to all Delta and Echo calls, FRI adheres to the principle of not picking and choosing in cases of life or death. This commitment to addressing all critical situations underscores the dedication and professionalism of FRI in providing enriched medical response services to the community.

Simply put, FRI's enriched medical response goes beyond the basic first response by encompassing a truly comprehensive array of call types. Their commitment to inclusivity, regardless of call severity, sets them apart from many departments, ensuring that the community receives comprehensive and top-notch emergency medical care. FRI's commitment to responding to all Delta and Echo calls underscores their professional devotion to the well-being of the communities they serve.



Fire Rescue International (FRI) Dispatch Protocols:

Enhancing Emergency Medical Response

In Alberta, FRI, alongside many peer fire departments, serves a pivotal role in emergency medical response due to its strategic community placement and the advanced training of its personnel. FRI's dispatch protocols underscore the organization's commitment to public safety, particularly in providing immediate medical assistance during emergencies.

Strategic Response and Advanced Training

FRI's infrastructure and training are designed to ensure rapid and efficient medical emergency responses. With fire stations strategically located for optimal coverage, FRI leverages its accessibility to significantly reduce response times to medical emergencies. FRI has an average chute time (time to leave the station) of 2 minutes and an average time of 7 minutes to get to a scene. Time is of the essence in emergencies, whether the community is near or far, our crews pride themselves on a proven record of fast and safe response times. FRI has fire stations in Onoway, AB as well as Alberta Beach, AB allowing them to serve 10 regional client municipalities with remarkable efficiency, as well as offering top-notch and professional level mutual aid and emergency response support to other municipal neighbours when invited to do so. FRI is also reviewing the potential of adding two-more stations in order to further improve response performance. Personnel trained as Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) are equipped to provide initial medical care, often critical in the process of stabilizing a scene and preserving life. This includes administering CPR, oxygen therapy, controlling bleeding, and stabilizing patients, bridging the critical gap until specialized medical services arrive.



Ensuring Competency through Frequency

FRI adheres to the principle that frequent engagement in emergency responses is vital for maintaining competency. This philosophy underpins the organization's decision to respond to a wide array of emergency call types, ensuring that personnel remain adept and prepared to handle various medical emergencies efficiently as an instinctive second nature response.

Diverse Response Model

FRI's dispatch protocol adopts a diverse response model, choosing to engage in a broader spectrum of emergencies compared to other fire departments. This decision is motivated by the intent to augment provincial ambulance responses, especially in urgent situations like cardiac arrests or when ambulance availability is delayed. FRI's response categories extend beyond traditional fire department calls to include urgent emergencies such as animal attacks, serious falls, and traumatic injuries, as well as situations where there are significant time delays in ambulance response. This service is viewed as an essential stopgap to the often intermittent rural or remote community service network.

The Significance of Professional Recognition and Licensing for Emergency Medical Responders in Alberta:

In the province of Alberta, the role of Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) is critical to the emergency services framework, particularly within organizations such as FRI. The path to becoming a recognized or licensed EMR is marked by rigorous standards and processes, overseen by the Alberta College of Paramedics. The multifaceted aspects of achieving



professional recognition as an EMR in Alberta, highlight the implications for training, ethical conduct, continuing education, legal recognition, and accountability.

Education and Training Foundations

As outlined by the Alberta College of Paramedics (2024) the journey of an EMR begins with comprehensive education and training, which is pivotal to acquiring the requisite knowledge and skills. Prospective EMRs must enroll in specific educational programs accredited by a select list of approved schools. This foundational phase is critical, as it lays the groundwork for all subsequent medical and ethical decision-making capabilities. Following their education, EMRs undergo practical training and testing, ensuring their readiness to face the myriad of challenges presented in emergency medical situations.

Examinations: A Gateway to Competence

Upon completing their training, EMR candidates face standardized examinations set by the Alberta College of Paramedics. These exams are designed to assess a candidate's theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and ethical reasoning. Passing these examinations is a testament to the candidate's competence and readiness to serve as a professional EMR, marking a significant milestone in their professional journey.

FRI operates at the EMR level, showcasing its commitment to providing immediate medical assistance in emergencies. Notably, their members hold licenses from the Alberta College of Paramedics as healthcare professionals, signaling an elevated level of expertise and ensuring a high standard of care. This EMR professional accreditation signifies that FRI



personnel possess the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate diverse medical emergencies. To uphold and enhance their skills, FRI members actively engage in mandatory continuing education throughout the year. This commitment to ongoing learning ensures that responders stay abreast of the latest medical advancements, protocols, and technologies. Adherence to a rigorous code of conduct and standards further solidifies the professionalism of FRI, emphasizing ethical behaviour and the delivery of high-quality emergency medical services. FRI has third-party oversight and governance as well as a medical director who provides guidance and direction when needed.

In addition to individual licensure, FRI places a strong emphasis on accountability and risk management. Each team member is individually insured, and the fire department itself carries malpractice and general liability insurance, providing a comprehensive safety net for both responders and the community. This dual layer of insurance helps to mitigate potential risks associated with emergency response, ensuring that both responders and those in need of assistance are protected.

Accountability is a core tenet of FRI's operational framework. Beyond being answerable to the municipalities they serve, the fire department operates within the regulatory framework defined by the Alberta Health Professions Act and the Ministry of Health. This dual governance structure ensures that FRI not only meets local expectations but also aligns with provincial health regulations, emphasizing a broader commitment to public health and safety.

Furthermore, FRI's approach to emergency medical response is characterized by a robust foundation of professional qualifications, individual and departmental insurance, ongoing



education, and strict adherence to codes of conduct. FRI is an important partner of Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the delivery of health care, putting patient care and comfort at the forefront.

Training and Certification

Licensed EMRs undergo extensive training over 200 hours (Emergency Services Academy) of theoretical and applied education, covering a wide range of medical topics including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and specialized emergency care skills. This training prepares them for a broad scope of emergency responses and requires registration through the Alberta College of Paramedics. In contrast, First Aiders receive basic training over a weekend, focusing on immediate response techniques like CPR, wound care, and stabilization until professional help arrives. While First Aid level training remains a staple of traditional fire service models, FRI is dedicated to moving beyond this basic standard based on “good faith” and is committed to continuing to deliver a professional and accredited standard of service, including medical response support. To this end, FRI is taking the necessary steps to increase practitioner training to include the application of nitrous oxide (happy gas) to improve the patient experience through pain and anxiety management. FRI is also exploring the possibility of increasing level of care to the Primary Care Paramedic Level to further improve the outcomes of medical callouts.

Legislation

EMRs are regulated under the Health Professions Act (HPA), ensuring they meet standards for competent and ethical practice within Alberta's healthcare system. The HPA encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and specifies restricted activities that only qualified



practitioners can perform. First Aiders operate at a basic level of care, guided by standard first aid practices.

Responsibilities

EMRs bear a higher level of responsibility, making critical decisions, prioritizing interventions, and collaborating with healthcare professionals as part of an emergency medical team. First Aiders play a supportive role, offering immediate care and comfort until advanced medical help arrives, often in community, workplace, or public event settings.

FRI exhibits a high level of preparedness by ensuring that their units are equipped to the basic life support (BLS) ambulance standard. This signifies that their personnel possess the fundamental skills necessary to provide immediate assistance in emergencies. Members go beyond basic life support, demonstrating their capability to deliver critical life-saving interventions. These include administering oxygen therapy, utilizing airway adjuncts, and providing vital medications as needed. The ability to offer such interventions enhances the level of care provided on scene. Having the ability to do this helps to provide a seamless delivery of care to the patient.

Moreover, members are adept at performing vital tasks such as monitoring and recording vital signs. This meticulous attention to detail allows for a thorough assessment of the patient's condition, ensuring that appropriate medical interventions are administered promptly. The ability to relay accurate information and provide a proper patch-over to paramedics further streamlines the continuum of care, facilitating a smooth transition when additional medical assistance is



required. In addition to their advanced capabilities, personnel are skilled in spinal immobilization techniques. This crucial skill ensures the safety and well-being of patients with potential spinal injuries, showcasing their dedication to thorough and effective emergency medical response beyond the basic. High-level Health Care Provider continuous Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) proficiency is yet another notable skill set. Members are trained to deliver CPR with precision, contributing to the immediate stabilization of patients in cardiac arrest.

Beyond the Basic: Emergency Medical Response vs. First Aid Training

FRI's units are not only equipped to the basic life support standard but also excel in delivering advanced life-saving interventions. From administering medications to performing spinal immobilization and high-level CPR, members demonstrate a comprehensive and proficient approach to emergency medical response, ensuring the well-being of those in need within the communities they serve.

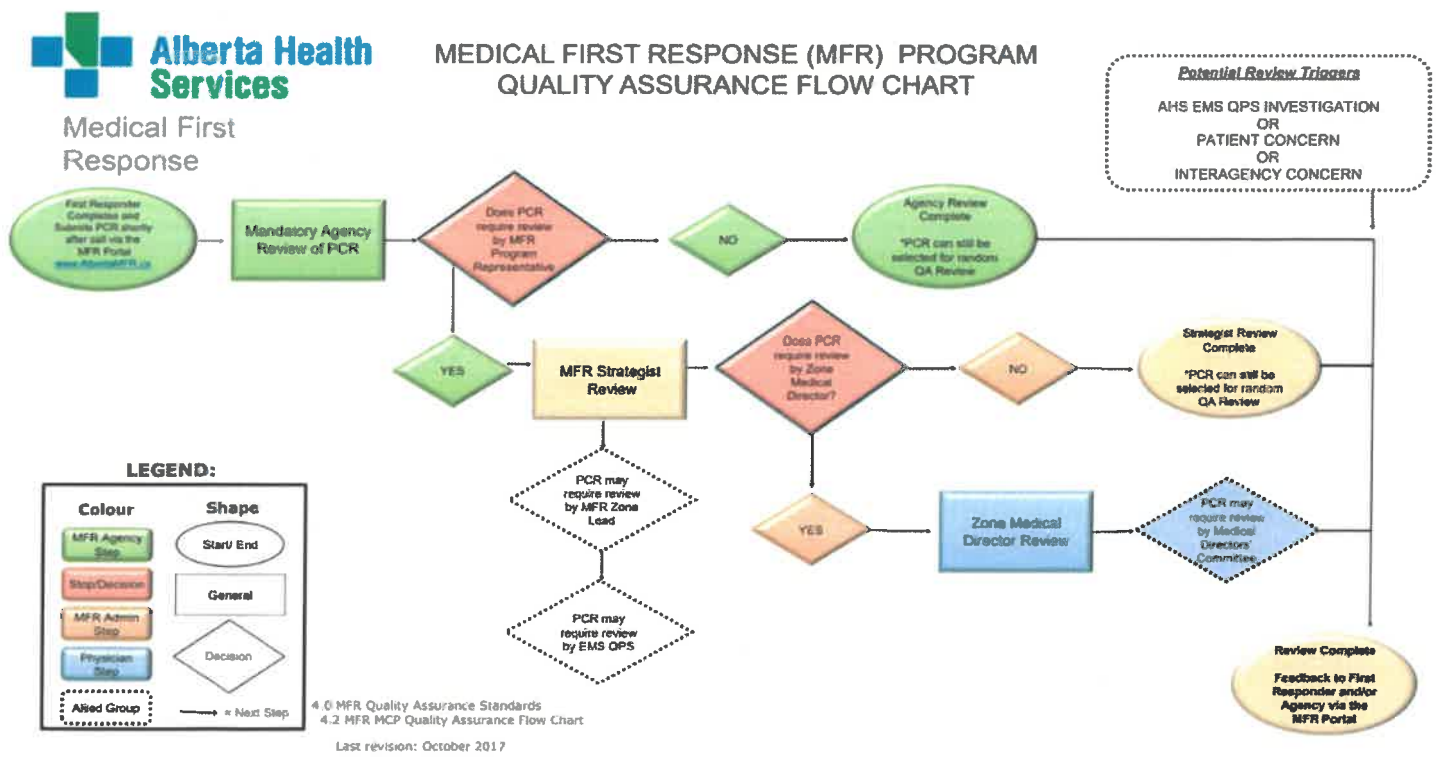
One of the key differences between a licensed EMR and a first aider in Alberta lies in the level of training and certification required. Emergency Medical Responders undergo comprehensive training programs that are typically more extensive and in-depth than those for basic first aid. EMR training covers a wide range of topics, including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and specialized skills such as airway management, oxygen administration, and basic life support.



In contrast, first aid training is generally more basic and focuses on immediate response and stabilization until professional help arrives. First aid courses typically cover fundamental skills such as CPR, wound care, and basic injury management. First aiders may not possess the same level of medical knowledge or specialized skills as licensed EMRs.

Figure 1.

MFR Quality Assurance Flow Chart



Both licensed EMRs and First Aiders play crucial but distinctly different roles in emergency care in Alberta, highlighting the need for a diverse range of responders with varying skill sets to ensure comprehensive community well-being.



Upholding Ethical Standards

Professional EMRs are bound by a stringent set of ethical guidelines and standards of conduct established by the College of Paramedics. These ethical standards are essential for maintaining the integrity and reputation of the profession. They guide EMRs in delivering care that is not only effective but also respectful of patients' rights and dignity. The Code of Ethics, an integral component of the Canadian Medics Profile, applies across various settings, from clinical to operational, guiding public expectations of professional practice.

The Imperative of Continuing Education

The field of emergency medical services is dynamic, with continuous advancements in medical knowledge and practices. As such, licensed EMRs are required to engage in ongoing professional development. This commitment to lifelong learning ensures that EMRs remain at the forefront of medical practice, equipped with the latest knowledge and techniques to serve their communities effectively.

Legal Recognition and Accountability

Obtaining a license from the College of Paramedics is not merely a formality; it signifies legal recognition and the right to practice as an EMR in Alberta. This legal status comes with the responsibility to adhere to professional standards and the obligation to maintain adequate personal insurance. Moreover, licensed EMRs are subject to regulatory oversight, ensuring accountability and adherence to ethical standards. Failure to comply with these standards may lead to disciplinary actions, reinforcing the importance of professionalism in every aspect of an EMR's duties.



The process of becoming a licensed EMR in Alberta is comprehensive and demanding, reflecting the critical role EMRs play in the healthcare system. Through stringent education and training, rigorous examinations, adherence to ethical standards, commitment to continuing education, and accountability under legal and professional oversight, EMRs are prepared to fulfill their duties with competence and integrity. This rigorous path ensures that when faced with emergencies, Alberta's EMRs are not only ready to respond but also equipped to provide care that is both effective and ethically sound, upholding the trust placed in them by the communities they serve.

One of the most unique and advantageous features of FRI, is their ability to directly contact their medical director for consultation and authorization to perform more advanced medical procedures. This capability enables FRI personnel on-scene to seek expert guidance and potentially expand the scope of medical interventions beyond the standard protocols. This dynamic communication channel with the medical director ensures a swift and informed response, further enhancing the level of care provided in critical situations. Additionally, all FRI members are equipped with Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System (AFRRCS) radios, allowing direct communication not only with 911 dispatch but also with the ambulance units enroute to the emergency call. This dual communication pathway facilitates real-time information exchange between fire rescue personnel and advanced medical crews. Such direct communication proves invaluable in providing patient updates, sharing vital information, and coordinating efforts seamlessly. This collaborative approach enhances the overall efficiency of the emergency response, contributing to a smoother transition of care and ultimately optimizing patient outcomes.



The ability of FRI crews to communicate directly with incoming advanced medical units provides a patient-centric approach. By offering timely updates and relevant details, FRI ensures that the transition of care is not only swift but also well-informed, providing the incoming advanced medical teams with the necessary insights for an effective continuation of treatment. This unique communication sets a high standard for comprehensive and coordinated emergency medical response.

Specialized Equipment and Collaboration

FRI's approach is enhanced by the availability of specialized medical equipment on their vehicles, including advanced life support tools like defibrillators, oxygen delivery systems, and airway management tools. Such equipment, allows FRI to offer substantial medical assistance on-site. The collaboration between FRI and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) further ensures a cohesive response to emergencies, maximizing the chances of positive outcomes.

FRI's dispatch protocols are a testament to the organization's integral role in emergency medical response within Alberta. By combining strategic station placement, advanced training, specialized equipment, and a diverse response model, FRI significantly contributes to public safety. This proactive and prepared approach to medical emergencies helps to complement the services provided by EMS and further assists the people in the community.

FRI stands as a strong example in the realm of emergency medical care, serving as a guiding model for fire departments widely. Its blend of professionalism, skill, and quick response plays a key role in advancing community welfare. FRI's team, through their thorough EMR-level



training and ongoing skill enhancement, demonstrates commitment and proficiency. Their collaboration with Alberta Health Services through the Medical First Response Program and licensure by the Alberta College of Paramedics ensures that services are both effective and adhere to a high standard of care, which benefits all community members. This dedication to professional excellence, paired with the right skills and resources, highlights the significant impact FRI has on those it assists. Moving forward, FRI's focus on innovation, education, and regulatory compliance serves as a testament to how well-organized teamwork and continuous learning can improve emergency services, making it a vital support system for the community.



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[%20and%20Omega%2C](https://www.firefightingincanada.com/a-tiered-transition/#:~:text=Based%20on%20responses%2C%20the%20caller,life)%2C%20Alpha%20and%20Omega%2C)

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