

# inSafety

Ambulance New Brunswick  
Public Newsletter

Fall 2011 Edition



Ambulance New Brunswick (ANB) is pleased to present its first installment of the *inSafety* newsletter. The goal of this newsletter is to educate New Brunswickers about our staff and the services that we provide. We are also looking forward to sharing safety tips and useful resources with the public. ANB strongly believes in the safety of its patients, its personnel and the public. We hope you enjoy learning more about your provincial ambulance service provider!

## A Paramedic is Much More than an “Ambulance Driver”

More often than necessary, we hear the words “ambulance driver” when referring to an EMS (emergency medical services) professional. Driving patients’ to-and-fro emergency health care facilities is just a fraction of what’s included in a day-to-day scenario of the paramedic profession.

Paramedics are health care professionals who provide medical support to patients on scene, en route to hospitals or other medical facilities. Given the unpredictability of clinical presentations in the field, they are skilled in emergency techniques and well-versed in various medical treatments. Paramedics are trained in administering medication to patients for the relief of specific symptoms and conditions.

As an entry point into the emergency health care system, paramedics have a large amount of medical training that can be put to the test at any time due to the variety of calls they respond to. They can be called upon to manage cardiac arrests, perform defibrillation, secure airways, assist with childbirth, immobilize fractures, and provide treatment for chest pain, difficulty breathing or numerous other injuries or illnesses. Furthermore, paramedics can control and manage critical situations, mass casualty incidents and trauma victims. Paramedics also provide needed medical support to patients during inter-facility transports when patients are transferred between hospitals or other medical facilities.

Next time you see paramedics, think twice about the care they provide before identifying them as mere “ambulance drivers”.

### Patient Testimonials

*“I expected my two year old to be a handful and to be perfectly honest, scared of the whole experience. I could not have been more wrong. The paramedics turned a situation no one really wants to go through into a positive one. They were compassionate, calm and professional. We would like to thank you for a job well done.”*

*“The ambulance was very prompt in responding to my call of distress and the paramedics were understanding and professional. Their sense of humor helped me to relax and aided in my breathing which was very labored. The humor was appropriate in this situation.”*

*“Please convey to both of the paramedics my gratitude for responding in unbelievable blizzard conditions. Their services were essential resulting from an error in prescribed medication.”*

*“The crew that arrived were EXTREMELY kind and caring. My grandson was very frightened, and he was given a teddy bear which didn’t help that much. In order to keep oxygen on him, the paramedic asked my grandson if he wanted to be his “junior paramedic”. My grandson helped him out by holding the oxygen mask, thus getting the oxygen that he so desperately needed. It was a very inventive idea, and calmed my grandson down knowing he was helping out.”*

*“Just a note to say how great your ambulance attendants were to me when I got sick and had to go to the hospital. It seemed like no time at all when my son called the ambulance, they arrived. The paramedics were so kind and in control of everything that I didn’t worry at all. I felt like I was in good hands, and I was. Thanks again to them for their kindness, knowledge and wonderful care I received. Keep up the great work!!!”*

## A Triad of EMS Professionals

ANB employees consist of three types of professionals who collaborate on a daily basis: emergency medical dispatchers (EMD), paramedics and flight nurses. Together, they form the ultimate EMS team!

The EMD is a communications specialist assigned with the task of gathering information related to medical emergencies. If need arises, the EMD can provide verbal assistance with life saving instructions prior to the arrival of Emergency Medical Services. The EMD dispatches and assists EMS resources responding to an emergency call.

A flight nurse is a highly trained registered nurse experienced in advanced life support and critical care. Dealing with a variety of emergencies and diverse conditions, the flight nurse needs the combined skills of an intensive care nurse, emergency nurse and critical care nurse.

All three professions play an important role in delivering rapid health care services to New Brunswickers in urgent and non-urgent situations.

## Do you have what it takes to be a Paramedic?

Have you ever given some thought about becoming a paramedic? It might have crossed your mind as you saw an ambulance swiftly passing by with lights and sirens. Professionals in uniforms saving lives on a daily basis. Sounds glamorous, doesn't it? Television shows and movies repeatedly depict exceptional situations where first responders play a vital role in saving lives. And they absolutely do, but don't expect it to happen every day, week or month. In addition to emergency and non-emergency calls, inter-facility transfers represent close to 40% of the total volume of calls received on a yearly basis. Every call might not require medical assistance, but patients will forever remember the care and compassion they received during their journey in the ambulance. "Don't look for glory. It's not about you. It's about serving the people," advises Charles Stewart, a 31-year veteran from the Tobique area.

What qualities should a paramedic have? "You have to be emotionally stable, comfortable with personal interaction, think on your feet and always remain calm," says Troy McQuinn, a 17-year veteran and Manager of ANB Emergency Preparedness. He adds, "Patients need to know you are in control and they can trust you, they want to feel safe." Empathy and active listening are sought-after qualities of a successful paramedic. "There is a lot of interaction with patients, 90% of the job consists of talking to them," mentions Mathieu Haché, a 12-year veteran and ANB Clinical Quality Coordinator. John LeBlanc, a 25-year veteran and Paramedic Coordinator from the Campbellton area, adds, "When I pick up a patient, I treat them the way I would want to be treated. I would treat them as a family member".

Working as a paramedic is stimulating. "I love doing what I do because there is always something different (i.e. no two chest pains are the same). We never know what we will be doing at the start of our shift," says Crystal Hart-Drake, a paramedic with 11 years of experience serving the Keswick area.

Paramedicine is not for everyone. However, the right attitude, patient care skills and a clear understanding of the service provided makes it a very rewarding profession.

## Brief History of Paramedicine

The term "paramedic" comes from the Greek "para", meaning beside or near, and "medical"; as in "related to medicine in an auxiliary capacity". Initial mentions of paramedicine efforts occurred in Ancient Rome, where older and retired combatants removed injured and wounded from the battlefields and provided them with some form of care. During the American Civil War, permanent methods were developed with the first uses of a triage system which was applied later in communities. When ambulances were first developed, they were operated by drivers and attendants who had little or no medical training, where the term "ambulance driver" was coined.

In the early 1960s, experiments in a few civilian centres greatly contributed to the progress of pre-hospital emergency care. It was clear over the years that providing and improving care to victims was necessary to help them to survive the journey to a health care centre.

Here in New Brunswick, ambulance services are an integral part of the provincial health care system. The provincial medical director grants paramedics the legal right to practice their profession with a regulated paramedic service. Although paramedicine is still a fairly new profession, exciting and innovative research and training is propelling this career to new heights!

## What happens when you call 911?

When you call 911, your call is answered at one of the provincial 911 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP). Calling from a landline is much more effective than from a cell phone because it provides a number and address of the phone you are using, saving precious time. If you require an ambulance, your call will be transferred to ANB's dispatch centre, which operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

It is important that you have the following information ready:

- The address, community name and phone number where the ambulance is required
- What happened
- How many patients there are
- List of medications (if applicable)

An emergency medical dispatcher (EMD) will ask you several questions to help triage the call and ensure the ambulance is responding to the correct location of the person requiring the ambulance. The information you provide will assist in sending the appropriate resources quickly and efficiently.

*We welcome your feedback! If you have a testimonial, question or concern about Ambulance New Brunswick, please email [info@ambulancenb.ca](mailto:info@ambulancenb.ca). We would love to hear from you!*