

## ***Background, History Emergency Medical Services*** **Paramedic program City of Hemet Fire Department**

I would like to extend my appreciation to our City and the surrounding Valley – I am honored to serve as your Fire Chief. My business is serving over 85,000 people who live and work in the City of Hemet. The Hemet Fire Department's business model places focus on the delivery of Fire and EMS Emergency Services. These emergency services need to be reliable, and most importantly efficient to achieve the desired results – Saving Lives and Property. It's against this backdrop that I would like to highlight our Paramedic program, provide an historical perspective on its evolution and why it's so important towards our primary mission of saving lives in our community.

The evolution of the present-day Emergency Medical Services (EMS) started in the early 1960's. Experiments in Belfast, Ireland and Toronto Canada, highlighted the benefits of providing advanced medical care to cardiac patients in the field environment. To accomplish this, ambulance personnel and medical interns were utilized, responding from local hospitals. The benefits of "medical care in the field" were further highlighted in a published 1966 report entitled "Accidental Death and Disability: *The Neglected Disease of Modern Society*" revealing that soldiers who were seriously wounded on the battlefields of Vietnam had a better survival rate than those individuals who were seriously injured in motor vehicles accidents on California Highways.

These studies revealed a number of important factors leading to enhanced survival rates: comprehensive trauma care, rapid transport to designated trauma centers, and a new type of trained technician – trained to perform advanced life support skills, e.g.: fluid replacement, advanced airway control, and other critical lifesaving procedures in the field setting.

In the 1970's, California was ground zero in the development of the Emergency Medical Services System. Medical experts recognized and embraced the delivery of EMS as a component of Public Safety: the industry with the most experience in the delivery, planning, and managing public safety challenges was the fire service. The fire service was selected by those medical experts in part because it was uniquely positioned to provide the delivery of EMS services having in place, personnel, facilities, and equipment required to deliver this service to the community. On July 14, 1970, California Governor Ronald Reagan signed into law the Wedsworth-Townsend Act, which created legislative authority to establish the Paramedic program in California, which led to similar programs across the United States.

Today, Fire based EMS is the primary provider of Advanced Life Support services throughout the nation, including California, and locally in the City of Hemet. In November 2014, the City of Hemet Fire Department established its Paramedic Program, providing front-line Paramedic response from Fire Station 1, Fire Station 2, Fire Station 3 and expanded this service in early 2015, establishing a Paramedic Squad at the newly re-opened Fire Station 5. Plans are underway to develop an additional Paramedic unit at Fire Station 4 in the near future.

An equally critical component of the pre-hospital Paramedic program is ambulance transportation. The Ambulance industry has evolved from a small cottage industry to the present day integrated component of the EMS delivery system. American Medical Response (AMR) as we know it today has evolved from a collection of smaller ambulance companies. The City of Hemet was originally served by Hemet Valley Ambulance Service, who brought the first

Paramedic care to the residents of the San Jacinto Valley in 1975. Hemet Valley Ambulance was acquired by AMR in 1997.

In the City of Hemet, when you call 9-1-1 for a Medical Emergency, Hemet Fire Department Paramedics are the first responders, an AMR ambulance staffed with a Paramedic and equipment who is contracted through Riverside County to provide transportation, arrives on scene, assist the Fire Department Paramedics and transports the patient to the hospital. This system allows for “seamless” patient care as the fire paramedic and the ambulance paramedic care for the patient as a team, then the ambulance transports the patient to the appropriate hospital with paramedic level care and the fire engine with a paramedic immediately goes back into service ready for the next call in its area.

The evolution of emergency medical services by the Hemet Fire Department continues to evolve. All Hemet Firefighters are trained at the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-Basic) level. Acknowledging the importance of EMS quality assurance, continuing education and the continued support of the Fire Departments EMS Mission, the Hemet Fire Department has a dedicated Nurse Educator who services as the Department’s EMS Coordinator, including a dedicated Medical Director.

Today, the Hemet Fire Department serves a population of over 85,000, encompassing nearly 28 square miles from strategically located Fire Stations in the City of Hemet, staffing 4 paramedic units (1 paramedic each on 3 Fire Engines, 1 Paramedic on a Squad). Engine Company staffing in addition to 1 Firefighter/Paramedic, include an Engineer and Captain – both of which are trained at EMT-Basic. The Squad in addition to 1 Engineer or Firefighter/Paramedic includes an additional Firefighter.

Both Fire and EMS response are time critical. Rapid initial fire response affords firefighters the ability to keep the fire to the room of origin, put the fire out prior to exploding (known as flashover) and results in significantly lower rates of deaths, injury and property loss. Rapid response by Firefighters to EMS calls, such as a Cardiac arrest is also critical, Cardiac arrest survival chances fall by seven to 10 percent for every minute between collapse and defibrillation. The ability to provide timely advanced life support is key to survival.

Utilizing dual-function, cross trained firefighter paramedics versus single function paramedics (as found on Ambulances) maximizes efficiencies and cost effectiveness while maintaining required fire protection service level standards, since many emergencies require both a fire/rescue EMS response.

The City of Hemet benefits from this public/ private partnership between Hemet Fire Department and AMR, the true benefactor, our residents and visitors who live and work in our City who rely on our 9-1-1 system that is efficient and reliable in their time of need.

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