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!! FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE !!

SFMD Celebrates 41st Annual Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week

In 1973, President Gerald Ford authorized EMS Week to celebrate Emergency Medical Services, its practitioners and the important work they do in responding to medical emergencies. Back then, EMS was a fledgling profession and EMS practitioners were only beginning to be recognized as a critical component of emergency medicine and the onset of fire-based EMS was just beginning.

A lot has changed over the last four decades. Fire-based EMS is now firmly established as a key component of the medical care continuum, and the important role of EMS practitioners in saving lives from sudden cardiac arrest and trauma. Every day your SFMD Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics are working hard to get people to the hospitals best equipped to treat heart attacks and strokes; and in showing caring and compassion to their patients in their most difficult moments.

The Superstition Fire & Medical District (SFMD) has a long history of providing emergency medical care by first responding firefighters. As the delivery of fire-based EMS continued to evolve through the 70's and 80's, the Fire District began training personnel to the level of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's), Intermediate EMT's, and then Certified Paramedics. These new EMS providers brought advanced medical skills, such as endotracheal intubation, defibrillation and IV therapy to the citizens of the fire district.

In the earliest days of EMS, before cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and portable defibrillators, local hospital ambulances would respond to calls for help from the sick or injured, frequently arriving at the scene with little or no specialized equipment, and often no training. Because of this lack of training and technology, the majority of the more seriously injured patients already had expired by the time the ambulance reached them and almost surely by the time they reached the hospital. Pre-hospital care in those days was truly a "scoop and run" operation.

Additional changes to pre-hospital care throughout the nation have been as a result of military technology. As America's role in the Vietnam conflict came to an end in the 1970's, thousands of military-trained "Medics" returned home to the United States, with many taking jobs in the fire service. These Medics were fresh from the battlefield and well-trained in pre-hospital emergency medical care. They brought with them lifesaving skills and equipment designs developed for use by soldiers in wartime, such as Military Anti-Shock Trousers (MAST), and plastic IV containers.

These skills and training eventually were put to use across the nation, as policymakers throughout the country began to realize the benefits of having such expertise available to the public in the pre-hospital setting. The scope of the Paramedics' training became more defined and advanced as doctors and surgeons who spent time on the battlefield began to develop programs and protocols that eventually would bring new lifesaving skills to the general public.

Another important aspect and success of the EMS system was the designation of critical patient care categories and the development of Level One Trauma Centers. These facilities specialize in a particular area of expertise including severe trauma, burn injuries, snake bites, re-plantations and hyperbaric centers.

Today, that early pre-hospital care system has transformed into a State-of-the-Art EMS response system consisting of dozens of Firefighter/Paramedics and Firefighter/EMT's certified at both National and State levels. These dedicated individuals respond to more than 6,500 EMS calls a year in the fire district.

Many of the improvements in pre-hospital medical care, have been a direct result of fire-based EMS. Studies by the American Heart Association have shown a dramatic increase in the survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest victims who have quick and efficient CPR and defibrillation, followed by rapid access to the 911 system. Fire-based EMS allows Paramedics to perform 20-30 minutes of advanced care prior to, and during transport, greatly improving the patient's chances for recovery.

Paramedics now are performing skills in the field that once were reserved for "doctors only." Instead of the patient being brought to the emergency room, the emergency room is now being brought to the patient. SFMD recently placed into service a Community Care Unit staffed by a Captain Paramedic and a Nurse Practitioner, or a Physician's Assistant from Mountain Vista Medical Center. This unit is involved with many treatment and referral protocols that help to keep people out of the emergency rooms and healing more quickly in their own homes or at more appropriate care facilities.

SFMD has been recognized as a leader in fire-based EMS in the valley and state. In 2013, SFMD was recognized by the Arizona Department of Health Services as a 'Premier EMS Provider'. EMS continues to advance into the future with major strides. Our most important goal continues to be providing the finest, most advanced, pre-hospital care available. With the dedicated men and women of the SFMD continually offering their expertise to the system, that goal will not be difficult to achieve.

If you would like to know more about the SFMD, please visit our web site at www.sfmd.az.gov, or call our offices at 480-982-4440.

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