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Calling 9-1-1 is best option, says Chief

By Marni Walsh

Calling 9-1-1 is the best option in receiving the quickest and most optimal care, says Tom Reid, Chief of Dufferin Paramedics.

His remarks came in response to the airing of CTV's W5 report on Emergency Response Services in Canada.

W5 investigative reporter Kevin Newman reported that calling 9-1-1 ?does not guarantee? Emergency Response Services (EMS) ?can do all in their power? to save a patient.

First Responders, he said, have different ?restrictive levels of care? they can provide according to their training category under Ontario regulations, and that citizens are playing ?Russian Roulette? when they call 9-1-1.

The three categories of paramedic care Mr. Newman referred to in the report are Primary Care, Advanced Care and Critical Care.

Newman reported that Primary Care paramedics are limited in the drugs they can administer to patients and cannot perform intubations; Advanced Care can provide a wide variety of drugs and perform intubations; and Critical Care paramedics can offer the same treatment as a doctor.

But many front line paramedics believe that Mr. Newman may have damaged citizen's confidence in the emergency response system (9-1-1) in Ontario.

Tom Reid, Chief of the Dufferin County Paramedic Service, said he was ?grateful for the opportunity to provide accurate information and clarify the information provided in the episode? which aired October 8. ?At the end of the day, our work is about supporting a safe, healthy community and saving lives.?

?Firstly, Ontario is the pre-eminent jurisdiction in Canada for paramedic services,? says Mr. Reid. ?Paramedics in Ontario have the highest standards for education and training in Canada. All Paramedics employed in the Province of Ontario are highly skilled and intensively trained to respond to the health emergencies of our community members. Paramedicine is a highly regulated profession. Paramedics are directly regulated by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care under the Ambulance Act which outlines standards of practice.?

According to Chief Reid, education and evaluation is completed by Dufferin County Paramedic Service and by an independent regulatory body referred to as a regional base hospital program. In Dufferin County, the base hospital is the Centre for Paramedic Education and Research operated by Hamilton Health Services.

?Every paramedic must meet numerous and rigorous criteria established by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in order to maintain their certification,? says Reid. ?This includes annual demonstrated use of high-risk skills, complete continued medical education (CME), and various evaluations.?

Chief Reid wants the citizens of Dufferin to know that ?in the case of an emergency, people should call 9-1-1. During a health emergency, 9-1-1 is the most successful way to achieve a positive outcome.? He says the closest ambulance will respond and that all paramedics in the County of Dufferin are trained to assess and care for a wide-range of critical health care scenarios.

?By calling 9-1-1, you can be assured that you will be treated quickly and appropriately and transported to the most appropriate health care facility,? says the Chief. ?Call 9-1-1 first and call fast.?