



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## ***Ambulance Operator Program Put into Action***

You will soon see a different color helmet as County Fire initiates its first class of Ambulance Operator Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), but rest assured you will receive the same professional emergency medical services as you are now. This pioneer program is designed to augment staffing levels by putting licensed medical responders in the field so that professional firefighters can return to service and provide a more effective work force to ensure our communities are provided with the highest level of firefighting services.

Today, 21 Paramedic Ambulance Operators (Paramedic AO) and 21 Emergency Medical Technician Ambulance Operators (EMT AO) started their three week orientation. The orientation entails policies and procedures, scenarios, emergency service driving techniques, and a week of field experience, including responding to incidents Code 3 (utilizing lights & sirens).

“San Bernardino County Fire is the second largest provider of Paramedic ambulance transport in the County, with response to over 47,700 emergency medical calls last year.” stated Fire Chief Mark Hartwig. “The Ambulance Operator Program is a more effective use of our resources and will greatly benefit our outlying communities. This ground-breaking program is another step in our mission to provide efficient critical life safety services.”

Currently Firefighter Paramedics and EMTs respond to medical service calls. While still maintaining paramedic and EMT certification, this program will allow for these professional firefighters to return to the field and be readily available to respond to fires, rescues, traffic collisions and other lifesaving responses. In some parts of the County, this program will increase staffing from two to three firefighters on an engine. Additionally, with the increase in wait time at hospital emergency rooms it is not uncommon for firefighter paramedics to spend extended time at a hospital caring for a patient while waiting for the ER to take over patient care.

These 42 Ambulance Operators will be ready for service and start serving their communities on October 11<sup>th</sup>. A Paramedic AO and an EMT AO will be assigned to each ambulance and will respond under the supervision of a Captain. Initially, AOs will be assigned to an ambulance at Station 8 serving Lucerne Valley, Station 10 serving Phelan/Pinon Hills, Station 14 serving Wrightwood, Stations 36, 41 & 42 serving the Yucca Valley area, and Station 91 serving the community of Lake Arrowhead.

All County Fire Paramedic AOs are licensed paramedics. The Paramedic AOs function in a lead capacity and render advance emergency medical care including airway management, administering IVs and medications, operating pacemakers, and utilizing the defibrillator to administer shocks to patients with life-threatening conditions.

County Fire EMT AOs must maintain an EMT1 certification or greater. EMT AOs will primarily serve as an ambulance operator while also providing basic medical care to patients including bandaging wounds, taking vital signs, splinting limbs, providing CPR, and moving patients. They are responsible for transporting patients.

Funding for this program is provided through the department's current budget and at no additional cost to taxpayers. Additional revenue comes from the federally funded Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) Services Supplemental Reimbursement Program, which allows for supplemental reimbursement for unrecovered costs for providing medical transports to Medi-Cal beneficiaries. More about GEMT at <http://www.sbcfire.org/viewer/attachment.ashx?ID=55da2d4b-966c-41bc-9523-92d5183f84f7>.

San Bernardino County Fire remains dedicated to finding ways to reduce costs and seek innovative funding sources to lessen the burden on taxpayers, while continuing to provide the highest level of service. In doing so, the department plans on expanding its Ambulance Operator program, with another Orientation beginning in April 2015.

*San Bernardino County Fire is an all-risk/full-service fire department committed to providing the highest level of service in the most efficient and cost effective manner to the citizens and communities that we serve. San Bernardino County spans 20,000 square miles making it the most expansive county in the United States. County Fire's jurisdiction encompasses 16,500 square miles of extremely diverse environments that stretch from the Los Angeles County line on the west, to the Colorado River on the east, to the Nevada State line and Kern and Inyo counties to the north, and south to Riverside County. We proudly serve the citizens of the Cities of Adelanto, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Hesperia, Needles and Victorville, the Town of Yucca Valley and more than 58 communities, and all unincorporated areas of the county. San Bernardino County Fire remains committed to providing Premier Fire Services.*

Courtesy photos can be located at [www.sbcfire.org](http://www.sbcfire.org) under latest news.

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