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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **PARAMEDICS HELP INCREASE CARDIAC ARREST SURVIVAL RATES**

VICTORIA – The BC Ambulance Service is reporting a 20 per cent increase in cardiac arrest survival rates, attributed to improvements in the care given by BC Ambulance Service paramedics, Health Minister George Abbott announced today.

The BCAS is working in partnership with the Resuscitation Outcomes Consortium (ROC) – a resuscitation research initiative, first responders, and the emergency medicine research team at St. Paul’s Hospital – to improve survival rates of cardiac arrest victims.

“This is the first provincewide cardiac arrest research report produced as part of the ROC initiative,” said Abbott. “It shows that through focused dispatcher and paramedic training and education in new CPR techniques the BC Ambulance Service is saving more lives.”

Known contributors to cardiac arrest survival include: early bystander CPR, rapid response times, quality professional CPR, and early defibrillation. To improve these known contributors, the BC Ambulance Service delivered targeted training to paramedics and emergency medical dispatchers throughout the province in new CPR techniques. This included holding around 300 CPR courses at locations throughout the province for approximately 3,000 paramedics and also supporting CPR instructions to first responders.

“Early results from the report indicate that the increase in survival rates is primarily due to the BC Ambulance Service training on new and more effective CPR techniques, as well as an increase in bystander CPR through BCAS dispatcher coaching,” said Dr. Jim Christenson, vice-president of medical programs for the BC Ambulance Service.

The cardiac arrest outcomes report compares data collected between January and June 2006, the six-month period before improved paramedic training, and then between October 2006 and March 2007, the six-month period after training. The annualized number of survivors from cardiac arrest in the communities covered by the ROC research (which covers 75 per cent of all British Columbians) increased from 108 to 130, a 20 per cent increase in survival rates. If this effect is sustained, approximately 30 more victims of cardiac arrest will be resuscitated and discharged from hospital each year across British Columbia.

The report also showed that instances of bystander CPR increased, with bystanders now performing CPR in 41 per cent of cardiac arrest cases, often through the help and instruction of a BC Ambulance Service dispatcher.

“The best chance of survival for someone in cardiac arrest is still to have a bystander perform early CPR until paramedics arrive and can provide state of the art professional CPR and defibrillation. That is why the BC Ambulance Service is committed to promoting and educating the public through initiatives such as the Vital Link Award and High School CPR program,” said Christenson. “We see the value of CPR every day and have more and more evidence that demonstrates that good CPR works. The significant success so far achieved is not the ultimate goal but only the beginning. Continued focus on the primary determinants of survival will further increase the number of citizen survivors from sudden, unexpected death.”

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