
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services
BC Ambulance Service

PATIENTS TO BENEFIT FROM BOOST TO AMBULANCE RESOURCES

VANCOUVER – Lower Mainland patients will benefit from a \$2-million investment in 20 new full-time paramedic positions and the recent implementation of a \$4-million computer aided dispatch system that is helping the BC Ambulance Service manage increasing call volumes in Greater Vancouver, announced Health Services Minister George Abbott today.

“We are continually monitoring call data to determine where there are challenges,” said Abbott. “These new full-time paramedic positions will provide support to hard-working paramedics and dispatchers by adding one 24/7 ambulance and two 11-hour shifts during peak daytime hours to emergency medical service coverage in the Lower Mainland.”

New computer-aided dispatch technology has also been recently implemented in the Lower Mainland ambulance communications centre and will:

- Improve call assessment and triage – ensuring patients receive the right care, by the right provider at the right time;
- Enable dispatchers to better co-ordinate with other first responder agencies;
- Enable BCAS to adopt further technologies such as automated vehicle location monitoring to improve resource deployment and mobile data terminals to provide paramedics with patient information electronically while they are en route to a call;
- Enable all four BCAS dispatch centres to more seamlessly back each other up in the event of a natural disaster; and
- Simplify post-response analysis to gather data regarding call volumes, deployment etc. to support decision-making and maximize learning opportunities.

In the past five years, demand for ambulance service in just the Lower Mainland has increased by 21 per cent. BC Ambulance Service responded to 304,269 calls in 2007/08, up from 250,857 calls in 2003/04. The call volume figures include 9-1-1 calls and inter-facility patient transfers.

“The BC Ambulance Service faces the same challenges as other health-care providers in the country in our efforts to meet growing demand,” said Sue Conroy, BCAS chief operating officer. “Investing in new technologies and adding resources where required will help alleviate paramedic workload and ensure that BCAS continues to provide high-quality pre-hospital care.”

The 20 new full-time paramedic positions and three ambulances for the Lower Mainland were added as a result of recommendations by a joint BCAS-union committee studying paramedic workload. The committee will continue to review call volume data and paramedic work distribution.

Today, across the province, 470 ambulances and 41 support vehicles are on the street, compared to 457 ambulances and 27 units in 2003/04. And since 2001/02, the number of full and part-time paramedics employed by BCAS has grown by 38 per cent – 3,351 now serve B.C., compared to 2,436.

Contact:	Steven Roberts	Michelle Stewart
	Director of Communications	Communications Director
	BC Ambulance Service	Ministry of Health Services
	250 953-3165 (office)	250 812-5571 (cell)
	250 213-6366 (cell)	250 952-1887 (media line)

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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