

NYC Paramedic Program Celebrates 30 Years

In 1974, nineteen members of New York City's EMS graduated from a pilot program aimed at training Paramedics. This three-month training curriculum, which allowed for the introduction of advanced medical skills to "pre-hospital" care, was part of a nationwide transformation in emergency medical response. The program was conducted at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx and in July of 1974, the graduates of Paramedic Class #1 brought forth advanced life support services to the New York City 911 System for the first time. Paramedic interventions led to an almost immediate drop in pre-hospital mortality and morbidity rates in New York City.

The use of Paramedics in emergency medical response was a relatively new phenomenon (there were only a dozen Paramedic units in the United States in 1971) that quickly became a staple of pre-hospital care. In essence, it was realized that "a lot more lives could be saved if you could effectively bring the emergency room to the patient," according to EMS Chief of Training J.P. Martin. Just as the first EMTs evolved out of medical advances made during the Civil War, the modern Paramedic owes much to battlefield innovations in Southeast Asia. Doctors and surgeons returning from the Vietnam War were instrumental in the definition and advancement of Paramedic training, initially on the West Coast.

Beginning in the summer of 1974, for the first time in history, endotracheal (ET) intubations and defibrillations were being performed on New York City streets. Electro-cardiograms were being interpreted and intravenous fluids and first line cardiac medications were being administered by non-physicians, precious minutes before delivery to an emergency room. As a result of the Paramedic program, the city's ambulance service took a major step forward in professionalism and its ability to provide life-saving advanced medical care.

Since 1974, the Paramedic program has developed into a New York State Department of Health curriculum consisting of more than 1,200 hours of training. Under protocols developed and

endorsed by the Regional Emergency Medical Service Council of New York City and New York State Department of Health guidelines, modern day Paramedics utilized standing protocols and techniques and on-line medical control to address a multitude of advanced medical conditions, both in the adult and the pediatric patient.

The medical field is a practice which continually evolves, and the significant role and efforts of Paramedic Class #1 paved the way for the modern services we know today. These days, when emergency calls are placed, the dispatcher will either send out a basic life support (BLS) ambulance staffed by EMTs, or a Paramedic ambulance specializing in advanced life support (ALS), depending on the reported severity of the patient's condition. Skills like defibrillation and glucose administration, which were only performed by physicians and paramedics, are now routinely performed by EMTs and certified first responders. What began as two Paramedic ambulances assigned to the East Bronx has, in the past 30 years, grown into a far more robust Paramedic program, with 139 daily EMS Paramedic tours covering all of the city's five boroughs and advanced skills being adopted by Emergency Medical Technicians. Paramedic training has increased in scale and scope (up to nine months are now spent on education and drills, compared with the three-and-a-half months it took in 1974) and new tools, such as the 12-lead EKG and CO monitors for ET intubation, are constantly being introduced in the field.

This autumn, the 40th class of EMS paramedics will graduate, and the 41st will begin, marking the beginning of the fourth decade of pre-hospital advanced life support in New York City. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the EMS Paramedic service, the New York City Fire



EMS Paramedic Class of 1974

Department takes great pride in acknowledging the graduates of Paramedic Class #1, who pioneered new ground for the pre-hospital care community and the citizens of the City of New York.

EMS Combats Domestic Violence

In an effort to combat domestic violence, EMS has teamed up with Safe Horizons and Plays for Living to test-pilot a training program that will help paramedics and EMTs better identify and help victims of domestic violence.

The U.S. Justice Department reports that one in four women has been assaulted or raped by a current or former partner. Yet, domestic violence remains one of the most underreported crimes in the United States. Often EMS personnel are the first people to encounter a victim after abuse has occurred - placing them in a special position to help domestic violence victims.

The three-year collaborative effort which combines an instructional drama and role-playing among participants is funded by the Altria Group and will eventually be rolled out to a national audience as a training model.

"Our plays help to improve communication and open the way for solutions to be found to the myriad of difficult challenges we face at work, at home and at school," said Eunice Salton, Executive Director of Plays for Living.

For more information please visit:

www.playsforliving.org

www.safehorizon.org