

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Honors Emergency Medical Services Workers

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) honors all Emergency Services Workers Sunday, May 21, through Saturday, May 27, as Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week in North Dakota. The NDDoH also recognizes Wednesday, May 24, as EMS for Children Day.

This year's events honor the more than 5,000 personnel who serve North Dakota's EMS system and call attention to special issues regarding medical emergencies in children. "EMS Strong: Always in Service" is the theme of EMS Week.

"Emergency medical services are an integral part of North Dakota's health care system," said Tom Nehring, director of the Division of Emergency Medical Services and Trauma for the NDDoH. "These dedicated and determined emergency workers help to ensure the health, protection and physical well-being of all North Dakotans. They are heroes every day."

With the majority of North Dakota's EMS personnel working as volunteers, many services in the state are struggling to provide the necessary coverage. Services in very rural or frontier areas have been impacted most, with several North Dakota EMS agencies closing or reducing coverage in the last few years. For a profession committed to acting "always in service," 24 hours a day, seven days a week, a lack of volunteers can be devastating. More devastating might be the loss of EMS systems – which dramatically improve the survival and recovery rate of people who experience sudden illness or injury – in communities with large populations of elderly residents, people with special health care needs or children.

EMS for Children Day highlights the unique emergency care needs of children and emphasizes the importance of properly trained emergency personnel, appropriately equipped ambulances and emergency departments and well-defined pediatric treatment procedures.

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“For so long, we treated children as small adults,” said Elizabeth Pihlaja, North Dakota EMS for Children program coordinator. “Now we know better. North Dakota’s EMS personnel truly go the extra mile to make sure they have specialized training, carry the special equipment and know how to communicate with families. They give their spare time to be prepared to give kids the best care possible.”

Seventeen EMS agencies in the state are currently recognized as being “Pediatric Prepared” through a voluntary recognition program sponsored by the EMS for Children program. These services must participate in pediatric training, carry pediatric equipment and perform outreach in their communities. A list of these services can be found on the Division of Emergency Medical Systems website located at www.health.nd.gov/epr/emergency-medical-systems/emergency-medical-services-system.

For more information about EMS Week, contact Nehring at 701.328.4728. For more information about EMS for Children Day, contact Pihlaja at 701.328.2953.

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