GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
D.C. FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

ADDRESS REPLY TO
"FIRE CHIEF"

Biannual Certification of EMS Response Time Performance:
Mayor's Task Force on Emergency Medical Services, Recommendation 4 (a)

On September 27, 2007, the Task Force on Emergency Medical Services issued its *Report and Recommendations*. Among these recommendations was:

> 4 (a): *The Mayor shall establish a goal of providing ALS response times according to the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710, 100% of the time, as well as a goal of providing transport responses within 13 minutes, 100% of the time. The Department shall conduct quality improvement review of those calls where the goal is not achieved. No later than March 20, 2008, and every six months thereafter, the Mayor shall certify that the District of Columbia has met this goal, or announce what steps are being taken to achieve this goal.*

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments, 2004 edition,* states:

4.1.2.1 *The fire department shall establish the following time objectives:*
Eight minutes (480 seconds) or less for the arrival of an advanced life support unit at an emergency medical incident, where this service is provided by the fire department.

4.1.2.2 *The fire department shall establish a performance objective of not less than 90 percent for the achievement of each response time[1] objective specified in* ***4.1.2.1.***

For the past 12 months: March 2007 to Feb 2008, within the District of Columbia Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department (DC Fire and EMS):

- The percent of critical medical calls with first Advanced Life Support (ALS) (any unit) arriving within eight minutes (480 seconds) or less, measured according to the NFPA 1710 standard (en route-to-scene), was 94.29%.
- The percent of critical medical calls with first transport unit arrival within 13 minutes (780 seconds) or less, measured dispatch-to-scene, was 96.56%.

Thus, DC Fire & EMS is currently significantly exceeding the NFPA Standard 1710's ALS performance goal.

In addition, for Fiscal Year 2008, DC Fire & EMS internal performance target for transport unit arrival was changed from 13 minutes or less, 90% of the time, to the more rigorous 12 minutes or less, 90% of the time, since the agency was significantly exceeding the 12 minute target goal during Fiscal Year 2007. For Fiscal Year 2008 to date, DC Fire & EMS is exceeding this goal by delivering a transport

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[1] NFPA 1710 defines response time as: *"The travel time that begins when units are en route to the emergency incident and ends when units arrive at the scene"* (in DC Fire & EMS, this interval is referred to as "en route-to-scene"). This is a less stringent definition than that used by the DC Fire & EMS, which calculates its response time statistics from dispatch-to-scene when measuring the performance of Fire & EMS units, and from call-to-scene when measuring system response time from the patient's perspective.

unit to critical medical calls within 12 minutes or less, measured dispatch-to-scene, 95% of the time. The agency is within one half of one percent of meeting its performance goal for ALS arrival within eight minutes or less, measured dispatch-to-scene, doing so 89.6% of the time.

It should be noted that to achieve the NFPA Standard 100% of the time, as called for by Recommendation 4(a), even with a significant increase in the Department's number of personnel and apparatus, is not achievable because of the volatility and unpredictability of ambulance demand, as well as the contingencies of traveling on busy District streets. A review of national standards indicates that the District's use of fractile performance calculation with a 90% performance target is the best practice in response time performance measurement and reporting.

Nonetheless, the Department will use its existing level of apparatus in a more efficient manner and with additional ALS personnel in an effort to improve its ALS response time. The Department's ALS response time performance directly relates to the number of Paramedic Engine Companies (PECs) it maintains in service. The Department has mounted a major recruitment campaign for paramedic/firefighters with a goal of attracting a minimum of 100 new ALS providers to the agency over the next 12 months. As the number of ALS providers grows, additional engine companies will be upgraded to PEC status, and the Department will be able to get closer to achieving the 100% goal.

With respect to the Task Force recommendation that the Department conduct quality improvement review of those calls where the goal is not achieved, DC Fire & EMS currently tracks response time outliers through several means, including retrospective exception reporting, and monitoring by the agency officers stationed at the Office of Unified Communications. Calls with response times that fall outside of acceptable parameters are examined in detail through a variety of tools, including the use of satellites to track vehicle travel routes and speed. The findings are then referred to the appropriate office for operational review and/or quality assurance/quality improvement.

DC Fire & EMS is committed to transparent reporting of its EMS response time performance and posts a monthly performance report on its website at http://fems.dc.gov The most recent performance report: Fiscal Year 2008 to date (October 2007---February 2008) follows:

EMS Response Time Performance: Fiscal Year 2008 Report, Year-to-Date (February 2008)

Number of EMS Incidents:

	Current Month (February 2008)	Prior month (January 2008)	FY 2008 Year-to-Date Total	FY 2007 Year-end Total	One Year Ago (February 2008)
Total Medical Incidents	10,380	10,258	52,014	121,415	9,352
Critical Medical Dispatches	5,210	5,171	25,626	62,295	4,542
Non-Critical Medical Dispatches	5,170	5,087	26,388	59,120	4,810

Advanced Life Support (ALS) Response Time Performance:

Percent of Critical Medical Dispatches Receiving First Advanced Life Support (ALS) Arrival Within 8:00 Minutes or Less, Dispatch-to-Scene, FY 2008

Month	Percent ~ 8:00	FY 2008 Year-to-Date (cumulative)	Monthly Average ALS Response Time (minutes: seconds)	FY 2008 Year-to-date Average ALS Response Time
October 2007	91.0%	91.0%	4:52	4:52
November 2007	87.7%	89.4%	5:16	5:04
December 2007	91.2%	90.0%	4:58	5:02
January 2008	89.7%	89.9%	5:06	5:03
February 2008	88.3%	89.6%	5:14	5:05

Transport Unit Response Time Performance:

Percent of Critical Medical Dispatches Receiving First Transport Unit Arrival Within 12:00 Minutes or Less, Dispatch-to-Scene, FY 2008

Month	Percent ~ 12:00	Monthly Average Transport Unit Response Time (minutes: seconds)
October 2007	95.7%	6:02
November 2007	93.4%	6:23
December 2007	95.8%	6:01
January 2008	95.3%	6:17
February 2008	94.9%	6:23

Percent of Non-Critical Medical Dispatches Receiving First Transport Unit Arrival Within 12:00 Minutes or Less, Dispatch-to-Scene, FY 2008

Month	Percent <= 12:00	Monthly Average Transport Unit Response Time (minutes: seconds)
October 2007	95.5%	6:15
November 2007	93.6%	6:24
December 2007	94.8%	6:21
January 2008	94.3%	6:26
February 2008	93.1%	6:45

Percent of All Medical Dispatches Receiving First Transport Unit Arrival Within 12:00 Minutes or Less, Dispatch-to-Scene, FY 2008

Month	Percent ~ 12:00	Monthly Average Transport Unit Response Time (minutes: seconds)
October 2007	95.6%	6:08
November 2007	93.5%	6:24
December 2007	95.3%	6:11
January 2008	94.8%	6:21
February 2008	94.0%	6:30

First-Arriving EMT Performance (First-arriving resource, staffed by EMT with automatic defibrillator minimum):

Percent of Critical Medical Dispatches Receiving First EMT Arrival Within 6:30 Minutes or Less, Dispatch-to-Scene, FY 2008

Month	Percent ~ 6:30	Monthly Average Transport Unit Response Time (minutes: seconds)
October 2007	92.6%	4:05
November 2007	90.3%	4:21
December 2007	92.5%	4:11
January 2008	90.9%	4:19
February 2008	90.6%	4:23

Percent of Non-Critical Medical Dispatches Receiving First EMT Arrival Within 6:30 Minutes or Less, Dispatch-to-Scene, FY 2008

Month	Percent ~ 6:30	Monthly Average Transport Unit Response Time (minutes: seconds)
October 2007	78.8%	4:59
November 2007	77.3%	5:12
December 2007	77.6%	5:11
January 2008	75.7%	5:15
February 2008	72.8%	5:27

Percent of All Medical Dispatches Receiving First EMT Arrival Within 6:30 Minutes or Less, Dispatch-to-Scene, FY 2008

Month	Percent ~ 6:30	Monthly Average Transport Unit Response Time (minutes: seconds)
October 2007	85.8%	4:32
November 2007	84.1%	4:46
December 2007	85.4%	4:40
January 2008	83.9%	4:45
February 2008	82.4%	4:52

Call-to-Scene Performance: (Response time from the patient's perspective, measured from receipt of 911 call at the Office of Unified Communications to arrival on the scene by Fire/EMS.)

EMS Response Time, Call-to-Scene Performance by Interval, Critical Medical Dispatches, February 2008

Average Response Time (minutes: seconds)			
	Call-to-Dispatch*	Dispatch-to-Scene* *	Call-to-Scene* * *
First EMT	2:33	4:23	6:56
First Paramedic	2:41	5:14	7:55
First Transport Unit	2:45	6:24	9:09

*Note: The Call-to-Dispatch interval is controlled by the Office of Unified Communications (OUC). This is the time it takes to process a 911 call. This interval begins with receipt of a 911 call at the Unified Communications Center (UCC) and ends with the beginning of dispatch of FEMS resources.
** The Dispatch-to-Scene interval is the component of response time that begins with the dispatch of FEMS resources by the OUC, and ends with the arrival of FEMS on the scene.

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