



Yes, We EMD!

CITY OF BERWYN'S EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER LAUNCHES EMERGENCY MEDICAL DISPATCH

Berwyn, Illinois — Beginning on August 1, 2012, the City of Berwyn's Emergency Communications Center personnel will be placing months of training and preparation into use when they will begin to provide medical information and pre-arrival instructions over the phone. That's the concept behind Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD).

The City of Berwyn is pleased to announce that all of its Emergency Communications Center personnel have obtained certification as Emergency Medical Dispatchers and are licensed with the Illinois Department of Public Health. Utilizing PowerPhone's Total Response System, they will quickly and properly determine the nature and priority of the call, dispatch the appropriate response resources, and then provide the caller instructions to help treat the patient until the responding Emergency Medical Service personnel arrive.

"It is incredibly gratifying to see the culmination of a lot of perseverance and dedication in getting this program off the ground," said Chris Salafia, President and CEO of PowerPhone. "The Berwyn Fire and Police Department's had the courage and foresight to implement a protocol system that will not only offer the citizens of Berwyn a more consistent level of care, but a more complete level of care. The efforts put forth by everyone involved to coordinate all stakeholders, including Loyola Hospital, is a true testament to the commitment of the City of Berwyn and the revolutionary system put in place. They have raised the standard of care for their community, and their example will surely be followed by others."

"By enacting this program our Center is not only complying with the rules set forth by the State, but also setting the standard of care for suburban 9-1-1 center's under Loyola's EMS Department" said Berwyn's Fire Chief Denis O'Halloran. Berwyn is now the first standalone Emergency Communications Center in the Loyola system.

You may be asking "What exactly is Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)?"

Emergency Medical Dispatch refers to a system that enhances services provided by Public Safety Answering Points. An Emergency Medical Dispatcher is a professional Telecommunicator, tasked with the gathering of information related to medical emergencies by quickly narrowing down the caller's type of medical or trauma situation, so as to better dispatch emergency services, and provide quality instructions before help arrives. The term Emergency Medical Dispatcher is also a certification level and a professional designation, certified through Power Phone Inc.

In the early days of 9-1-1, Telecommunicators did not have a protocol system to accurately and consistently dispatch needed support or assign the necessary resources to the variety of calls coming in to their Centers. There were no key questions to narrow and focus calls or pre-arrival instructions such as CPR to help the caller until the needed help arrived. For the most part, Telecommunicators dispatched resources, told callers that help was on its way and after that, the Telecommunicator didn't have the capabilities to offer much else.

The quick and often hasty response could often produce inefficient responses. Without sufficient information about the situation, the agency risked sending the wrong emergency services and the caller was left without the benefit of further, life-saving instructions while waiting for whatever help was sent. The response system was lacking at its most critical period, and call centers throughout the country were providing varied levels of care to the public in crisis situations. Response teams were stretched to the limits, responding to simple problems while across the city someone may have been in need of immediate care.

It is important to note that Emergency Medical Dispatchers (EMD's) are not Physicians, Nurses or Paramedics. They cannot offer medical advice or give treatment recommendations.

If you call for an ambulance, you may be asking yourself “Why is the dispatcher asking all of these questions?”

Regardless of the information displayed on the screen, the 9-1-1 Telecommunicator has to confirm that it has not changed. When you are reporting an emergency, try to remain calm, as hard as that may be, so that the Telecommunicator is able to fully understand the problem. The Telecommunicator may ask you to stay on the line while they dispatch help. You may not hear anything during this time. **Do not hang up until the Telecommunicator returns and gives you further instructions.** You will be told when it is time to disconnect.

If you are calling with a medical problem, they will ask the patient's age, whether he or she is conscious and breathing and then a series of additional medical questions. These questions follow the Emergency Medical Dispatch protocol drafted by PowerPhone and approved by Loyola Hospital and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

For example, if you call because someone is having chest pains, you may be asked these questions:

- Is he/she alert and able to talk?
- Is he/she able to breathe normally?
- Has the patient had any previous history of cardiac problems?
- Has the patient sustained any trauma to the chest?
- Is the patient feeling faint, dizzy, sweaty or pale?
- Has the patient taken any medications or narcotics, drugs or alcohol?

To someone in an emergency, these questions might seem to take unnecessary time. However, answering these questions provides critical information to the Telecommunicator, so they can determine which emergency resources are needed and pass along further information to those units as they respond. ***It is important to remember that remaining on the line with the dispatcher does not delay response!***

Answer questions promptly, correctly, and calmly so that the Telecommunicator, who is a certified Emergency Medical Dispatcher, can provide you with important instructions before help arrives. They are trained to guide you through CPR, the Heimlich Maneuver or other first-aid procedures before the ambulance arrives — this could make a big difference in life or death situations.

Other Helpful Hints:

- Remain Calm; they need to be able to understand where help is needed
- Always listen to the Telecommunicator
- “Help is on the way” while you are answering the Telecommunicator’s questions
- Information is entered into a computer and dispatched to the proper units
- **Remain on the line until told to hang up.** The Telecommunicator may need more information or may need to give you further instruction
- Be familiar with your area. We can’t help if you don’t know where you are
- Make sure your address is clearly displayed and is clearly visible from the street
- NEVER intervene in a crime in progress.

Further information on the Emergency Medical Dispatch program can be obtained by contacting the City of Berwyn’s 9-1-1 Systems Administrator at 708-795-2114. Public speaking engagements are also available.