

# Novi firm awarded first-call ambulance contract



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Paul Phelps (left), president of the Community EMS Ambulance, and Greg Beauchemin, vice president of operations, recently signed the

first written agreement for emergency service with the city of Farmington Hills.

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Novi-based Community EMS has exclusive first-call rights in Farmington Hills under the first written agreement between the ambulance company and the city.

"The obligation behind the exclusive part is that they will call a backup if they can't respond," Farmington Hills Deputy Fire Chief Peter Baldwin said. "It gives us some recourse."

In turn, the Farmington Hills Fire Department, which is the first to respond to emergency calls in the city, can expect the ambulance company to meet minimum standards.

Advanced emergency medical technicians and ambulances are required to arrive at the scene of an emergency within specified response times, according to the agreement. Trained Farmington Hills firefighters provide first-response basic medical care. CEMS' advanced emergency medical technicians take over patient care when they arrive on the scene.

The two-year agreement provides guarantees for both the city and the ambulance company, a subsidiary of Botsford Health Services Corp. The agreement was recommended by the city's insurer, Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority. The agreement is not financial. The ambulance company charges patients, not the city, for transport and medical services.

"It's very good relationship for both entities," said Greg Beauchemin, CEMS vice president of operations.

AN AGREEMENT is necessary and timely because CEMS is rapidly expanding to other communities, which have agreements with the ambulance company. Under those agreements the ambulance company is required to respond. Without an agreement requiring the same thing from the company for Farmington Hills, "we could be left in the lurch," Baldwin said.

The ambulance company, which makes about 21,000-25,000 emergency runs annually, recently expanded its facility from 6,500 to 15,500 square feet on Heslip Drive, Novi, Beauchemin said.

Under the agreement, CEMS guarantees a response time of 10 minutes or less to 90 percent of the city's emergency calls. The maximum response time allowed by agreement is 15 minutes "except for extended circumstances," such as weather problems or an excessive number of emergency runs in the city.

If CEMS does not have an ambulance of its own available in the city, it is required to send a backup unit, whether bringing one of its own from

another community or having another company respond, Baldwin said.

In unusual circumstances when a longer CEMS response is expected, the fire department can transport a patient.

"If it's not in the best interest of the patient to wait, we can use one of two of our ambulances. But we don't make a practice out of transporting people," Baldwin said.

"OUR INTENT as a city is that we are calling an ambulance for members of the community, and we want to be sure they are getting the best services," he continued.

Under the agreement, CEMS must give city officials a fee and rate schedule. CEMS has the right to adjust fees as long as, in the opinion of city officials, the fees are "identical or nearly similar" to fees charged others in "the surrounding geographic area." CEMS must notify the city in writing at least 30 days before increased rates become effective.

The agreement also calls for exchange of training. CEMS personnel, for example, will be trained by Hills fire officials in defensive driving and hazardous material handling.

"They (CEMS) could provide training in medical issues, perhaps continuing education," Baldwin said.

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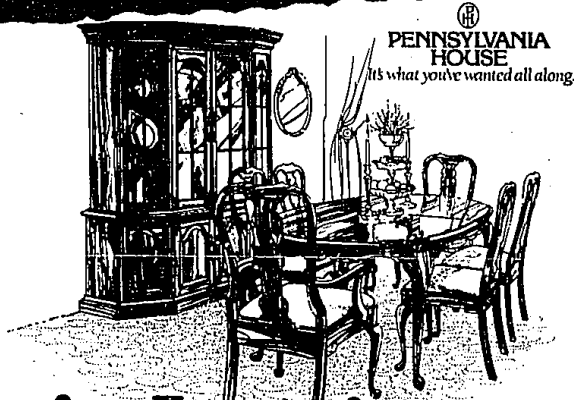
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