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## ConFire beefs up ambulance service with ALS interfacility transport capability

By Nick Marnell

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District added a new service as part of its contract as ambulance provider in most of Contra Costa County when it began offering its patients advanced life support interfacility transport service. The service is provided for patients who do not meet critical care transportation requirements but who need more than basic life support.

ConFire and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District transport patients who call 911 to hospital emergency rooms, if necessary. That does not change. What has changed is that ConFire, through its American Medical Response ambulance subcontractor, can also provide transport between hospitals, or from another medical facility to a hospital, for a Lafayette patient who needs advanced life support care and observation. Examples of advanced life support include administering continuous positive airway pressure for patients with breathing problems and thoracostomy, inserting a thin plastic tube into the pleural space between the lungs and the chest wall to remove excess fluid or air.

"We have been working on this for the past 15 months with AMR and our local emergency medical services agency," said ConFire Assistant Chief Terence Carey. The county LEMSA is Contra Costa Health Services, whose medical director must approve the medical facilities for transport.

ConFire deploys up to 40 ambulances daily, all staffed with a paramedic and an emergency medical technician. The ambulances are stationed dynamically, and Carey said that if the demand for the interfacility transport is high, the district may have to add even more resources.

"MOFD does not have a similar program and I do not believe it is feasible in our service area," said Fire Chief Dave Winnacker. MOFD currently staffs a single dedicated ambulance from Station 41 in Moraga with a second cross-staffed ambulance responding from Station 45 in Orinda. The chief explained that, because of the limited size of the system, taking a unit out of service for non-emergency transport would significantly degrade the district's ability to respond to emergencies and would result in delays for both response and transport.

ConFire began its ALS-interfacility ambulance transport service March 6.

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