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New Fire Department Medical Pilot Program Providing better care and improving services

Kent, Wash. - November 5, 2015- Beginning today, the Kent Regional Fire Authority's FDCARES program will start providing a new type of non-emergency medical assistance that will increase the level of care in our community.

The Fire Department Community Assistance, Referral, and Education Services (FDCARES) division was developed several years ago to provide better non-emergency medical assistance to the community and connect residents with the healthcare and social services they need.

A new development in FDCARES is an 18-month pilot program which places a registered nurse with a firefighter on a cost effective vehicle which will respond 24/7 to 9-1-1 calls that are determined to be "non-emergent" by Valley Communications, the 9-1-1 call receiving center for south King County. In addition, the nurse/firefighter team will also provide proactive home visits to residents who previously had relied on the 9-1-1 system for their primary medical care. The goal of the program is to build healthier communities by delivering the right care, at the right place, at the right time, for the right cost.

FDCARES already has a vehicle staffed by two firefighters which responds to similar types of calls, but will be able to provide a higher level of care by replacing one of the firefighters with a registered nurse. A total of four nurses are part of this pilot program, which is funded by grants and community partnerships.

There are two major advantages to this pilot program. First, by providing the skills of a nurse on the FDCARES vehicle, we can reduce the need for non-emergent transportation to a hospital, treatment in an emergency room, and again deliver the right care, at the right place, at the right time, for the right cost. The second major advantage of the program is that the FDCARES vehicle can replace a fire engine or aid car for those non-emergent calls, keeping those apparatus available for a medical emergency, fire, or hazardous materials incident.

According to Doctor Cameron Buck, ED Medical Director at the University of Washington's Valley Medical Center and the Medical Program Director for the FDCARES program, "I think this has to be an example of how we want our healthcare system to be successful in the next 5-10 years."

The pilot program has been possible because of our community partners UW Valley Medical Center, Premera Blue Cross, Tri-Med Ambulance, King County Emergency Medical Services, and King County Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

For more information on the FDCARES program, see our website at www.FDCARES.org or call 253-856-2273.

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