



NEWS RELEASE

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(February is Heart Month - Don't Delay, Call Right Away!)

You've seen it in the movies—a man clutches his chest and immediately falls to the ground in a full-blown dramatic portrayal of a heart attack. The truth is, a heart attack can begin so slowly or mildly that a person may be unaware of what he's experiencing. TVF&R crews respond to hundreds of heart-related calls each year. Many of these incidents involve patients who waited hours, sometimes days, before calling 9-1-1. Being uncertain if you or a loved one is experiencing a heart attack is normal, but a delay can be deadly or result in permanent heart damage. TVF&R EMS Chief Mark Stevens states, "The heart deteriorates with each passing minute from the onset of a heart attack to definitive hospital care (cath lab)."

With that in mind, TVF&R would like to remind the public – **Don't Delay, Call Right Away!** Chief Stevens added, "So many people have a 'wait and see' attitude or think 'I don't want to bother anyone.' However, we have the equipment, drugs, and skilled team to intervene *BEFORE* a cardiac arrest even occurs." With 22 stations and paramedics on every unit, TVF&R is able to provide the highest level of cardiac care. Every unit carries specialized drugs and advanced cardiac monitors with 12-lead EKG capability. These monitors enable paramedics to diagnose if the heart is failing and begin immediate treatment. If a patient must be transported, information gathered by paramedics is relayed to the local hospital, enabling physicians and staff to activate special heart teams and prepare for the patient before their arrival. This cooperative EMS system is already proving to be an asset in the race against time for heart attack patients. The national standard for field to cath lab is approximately 90 minutes. Data from local incidents show TVF&R/Providence patients making it from field to the cath lab in 49-62 minutes - and in one case, 26 minutes!

What are the signs and symptoms of a heart attack? Unlike a cardiac arrest—which strikes suddenly and includes a loss of consciousness or trouble breathing—most heart attacks involve: **chest discomfort** in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes or goes away and returns (may feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain); **upper body discomfort** such as pain or discomfort, in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach; **shortness of breath** before, during, or after other discomforts; **sweating, nausea, or lightheadedness**. **Note: Women are more likely to experience symptoms such as shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.** Additionally, if you're having these signs or symptoms, call 9-1-1 – do not drive yourself to a medical facility.

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