

MTCC a concept that makes sense

by Terry Ross



When the Medical Transportation Coordination Centre (MTCC) comes into effect next year or the year after, Manitobans outside of Winnipeg will have no worries when it comes to emergency medical services. The MTCC will see the effective coordination of emergency services and personnel including land ambulance, inter-facility transports, air ambulance and the Northern Patient Transportation Program.

When the MTCC is up and running, a rural medical emergency would have a scenario similar to this:

An emergency call is received by the 911 dispatch in Brandon who turns it over to the MTCC staff (at a site still to be determined). The MTCC staff is highly trained in the latest software and GPS mapping technology. Staff

determine the seriousness of the call and, since they are aware of where all of Manitoba's emergency vehicles and personnel are at any given time, allocate the closest emergency vehicle with the appropriately trained staff to that specific emergency. For hard-to-find locations, the MTCC dispatch can keep in direct contact with the emergency vehicle until it arrives at its destination.

Marie O'Neill is the acting director of Emergency Medical Services for Manitoba Health. She cites the following example of a situation that could arise under the current system that would improve with MTCC:

"An ambulance from Ashern has dropped a patient off at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg and is 'dead-heading' (returning empty) north to its base. As it approaches the

Town of Warren, an emergency call goes out from that hamlet.

"Under today's system, the dead-heading ambulance would be ignored and the 911 call would go to the emergency response unit in Stonewall, the closest unit to the Warren call.

"Under the MTCC system, dispatch would contact the dead-heading ambulance. It would make a quick right off of Hwy. 6 into Warren, and be at the scene much quicker than the vehicle from Stonewall would be."

As Marie points out, "When one is discussing an emergency situation, minutes are crucial. We are firm believers in the MTCC system and look forward to full implementation."

That seems to be the only negative in this story – waiting for implementation. A program of this magnitude cannot be brought in overnight. Many details are to be completed involving many experts and stakeholders.

There are four phases that the MTCC must go through leading up to implementation in 2004 or 2005. They are:

Phase I – define what is desired in the MTCC (done after exhaustive consultation with stakeholders)

Phase I – design a framework (a report will be submitted at the end of September)

Phase III – implementation

Phase IV – build on existing program

Concludes Marie, "The MTCC will provide 24-hour dispatch services for everyone in rural and northern Manitoba. It allows for the efficient allocation of emergency transportation and personnel to these areas. It is a timely concept and one that has the support of organizations like the AMM. For that, we are grateful." ●