



The EMT's and Paramedics of Local 2507

Affiliated with District Council 37, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
125 Barclay Street New York, New York 10007 (212) 815-1040

August 23, 1987

President

Richard McAllan

Vice President

Richard Gutwirth

Secretary-Treasurer

Daniel Burstein

Recording Secretary

Joan Hillgardner

Executive Board

Chuck Caple

Barbara Grady

Arthur Lester

Joseph Paz

Allan Reich

Hon. Stanley Brezenoff
First Deputy Mayor
City of New York
Office of the Mayor
New York, N. Y. 10007

Re: Mayor's Plan for Coordinated Action at
Emergencies

Dear Mr. Brezenoff:

Please allow me to introduce myself to you. I am the newly elected President of EMS Local 2507, DC 37. In this capacity, I have recently obtained a draft copy of your proposed changes to the "Mayor's Plan for Coordinated Action at Emergencies".

After reviewing this document, I must respectfully take exception to the thrust of the proposals in general. As a Paramedic with over ten years' field experience in this city, I understand the difficulties that can arise in trying to define emergency roles at the scenes of specialized emergencies. However, in my opinion, attempting such definitions misses the crucial issue of inter-agency cooperation at the scenes of such emergencies.

Indeed, as any emergency professional should readily admit, the most crucial ingredient to saving lives at the scene of almost any emergency is the level of cooperation between the emergency services present at the scene. Of course, in this regard, I include the Emergency Medical Service as a soon-to-be recognized third emergency service in this city.

As illustrative of my specific objections to your proposals, I point to the recent natural gas explosion in the South Bronx. In the rescue operation that ensued from that explosion, all three emergency services contributed to saving the life of the individual trapped for hours in the rubble. [As you may recall, EMS Paramedics

crawled into the rubble to administer IV fluids to the trapped individual while Police ESU and Fire worked to free him.] Any number of other situations could be illustrated where inter-agency cooperation was the key to saving patients' lives. For example, I have, on numerous occasions, started IV's on patients trapped in automobiles to stabilize them before any PD ESU operation was begun to extricate them. This or other life-saving techniques administered to trapped patients were always accomplished through close cooperation with PD ESU at such scenes. Of course, PD ESU and EMS would continue their cooperative efforts to correctly extricate or rescue the patients, thus minimizing the potential for worsening the injuries of the trapped patients.

But yet, despite years of proven EMS life-saving interventions at the scenes of emergencies, EMS's life-saving capabilities are once again totally overlooked in the Mayor's proposed order. Also overlooked are EMS' medical advantages of uniform emergency protocols as well as the availability of "on-line" physician supervision to all EMS units operating in the field. Instead, the order seems to imply that correct patient care should no longer be based on a cooperative effort that respects the continuity of emergency medical care, but rather that such care should now be "parceled out" to the Fire Department. This unfortunately ignores both PD ESU's traditional role in specialized rescue in this city as well as the close working relationship that PD ESU and EMS have developed over the last fifteen years.

In short, my greatest fear about the proposals contained in your draft is that it would deal a serious setback to inter-agency cooperation at the scene of emergencies by further stimulating "turf" disputes between the agencies. Rather, all emergency personnel at the scene of any emergency should be first and foremost charged with the clear duty to contribute to the saving of lives through the cooperative utilization of respectively available resources.

Please allow me to make it clear that I am in no way disparaging the Fire Department's contribution to the saving of lives within the area of their primary responsibility and expertise--that of course being fire suppression. I am however, opposed to the Fire Department's attempts to expand their roles, on an unlimited basis, to specialized or emergency medical response. Any significant expansion of FD non-fire emergency activities could easily add tens or even hundreds of thousands of runs to FD's call load and in turn slow their crucial fire-related response times. Indeed, even while FD is apparently seeking to expand its non-fire role, UFA President Mancuso is publically stating that the FD is understaffed for its current fire suppression role. In my view, FD has not yet recognized the lessons of the Schomburg Plaza tragedy--that FD should

aggressively expand its fire inspection role. Such an approach would allow FD to more effectively utilize its equipment and resources while affording the citizens of this city better protection from the threat of fire.

Turning to EMS, it is time to recognize the Emergency Medical Service as the true emergency service it has become. EMS should formally be given the emergency medical care mission it has been fulfilling for years on end. Moreover, EMS should be expanded dramatically to cover its increasing call-load. Indeed, based on this city's population and call load, EMS should be operating at least 600 eight hour tours daily, close to double the daily number now scheduled. Of course, EMS could expect to cut its response time almost in half if the operational units were increased in this fashion. As a result, many lives would be saved that are now being lost to backlogs in our chronically underfunded agency. The members of this EMS Local have certainly proven that they are capable of performing their life-saving mission--please fund us in such a way that we can do so more effectively.

Such an approach, coupled with emphasizing cooperation between the emergency agencies, would significantly improve the emergency preparedness of the City of New York. I respectfully urge you to consider the public benefits that would result from the implementation of my proposals.

Thank you for your consideration of the emergency issues outlined herein. Please contact me if we can be of any further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Richard J. McAllan
President

cc:

Andrew Stein, New York City Council President
Dr. Jo Ivey Boufford, HHC President
Dr. Alexander Kuehl, EMS Vice-President
Stanley Hill, DC 37 Executive Director