

Tuesday, November 11, 2008

For Immediate Release

The Regional Municipality of York joins York Regional Police to launch EMS Special Response Unit

Team of paramedics offer specialized medical care for high-risk emergency calls

NEWMARKET – The Regional Municipality of York joined York Regional Police to launch the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Special Response Unit (SRU) on Monday, November 10th. The event took place in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville at the Community Safety Village of York Region.

This team of paramedics is trained and equipped to offer specialized medical care for high-risk emergency calls, including those that involve multiple casualties, hazardous materials or dangerous police operations. The SRU provides a skilled response to emergency medical situations that are beyond the capacity of normally equipped and trained paramedics.

The launch included a program operating signing agreement between The Regional Municipality of York and York Regional Police, followed by two live-action mock emergency scenarios where the SRU may be required.

The first involved an injured police officer requiring life-saving emergency medical care, while the second situation involved a missing and badly injured person lost in a

densely wooded area where access to provide emergency services is difficult and limited.

“York Region is committed to offering the best pre-hospital emergency medical services for patient’s care and transport,” said York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch. “The Special Response Unit addresses the challenge of providing prompt and appropriate patient care in high-risk emergencies, protecting both the community and those who serve to protect it.”

The York Region EMS SRU is the only unit in Ontario to offer an all-hazards approach to specialized responses. The unit offer logistical and medical support to police tactical incidents and high-risk fire calls, plus multiple casualty incidents, the care and transport of bariatric patients (those weighing greater than 150 kg/350 pounds), hazardous material emergencies, search and rescue operations and public order incidents.

“Our paramedics are increasingly called to respond to emergency situations where their personal safety is compromised and specialized skills and equipment are required,” said Town of Markham Deputy Mayor Jack Heath, Chair of the York Region Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee. “The SRU’s training and equipment, vehicles and uniforms equip the team to respond to these calls safely and efficiently, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”



Pictured Above: York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch and York Regional Police Chief Armand La Barge sign EMS operating agreement

The SRU became operational in June 2008, and since then the SRU has responded to 621 calls, including 68 with the York Regional Police Emergency Response Unit (ERU). Training of the SRU is conducted in partnership with the York Regional Police ERU.

“York Regional Police is proud to partner with York Region EMS on this important initiative,” said York Regional Police Chief Armand La Barge. “With the assistance of our Support Services Units, including the Emergency Response and Public Order Units, EMS personnel are now trained and equipped to respond safely to high-risk incidents which not only benefits EMS, but police, fire and the community at large.”



Pictured Above: York Region EMS General Manager Norm Barrette with EMS SRU staff

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Attachment: *York Region launches EMS Special Response Unit media backgrounder*



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The SRU works within a regular EMS shift rotation, responding to emergencies as directed by the 911 call centre. When a SRU-related call is received, the SRU is deployed directly to the scene.

The SRU became operational in June 2008, and since then has responded to 621 calls, including 68 with the York Regional Police Emergency Response Unit (46 for medical support, 11 search and rescue incidents and 11 with the York Regional Police Clandestine Labs Unit), 30 fire incidents, 19 calls for the special operations trailer for logistical support, five bariatric patient responses and five hazardous materials incidents. An additional eight training exercises have also been completed.

SRU equipment includes an all-terrain vehicle to access and transport patients in almost any type of terrain and a special operations trailer to act as an emergency medical treatment station and command post at large emergencies. In the unfortunate event of multi-patient incidents, a logistics truck stocked with equipment, supplies and cots can drop supplies off at multiple sites.

The SRU uniform is distinctive from the regular York Region EMS uniform. The subdued colour of the uniform helps the SRU blend into the surrounding terrain. A complete uniform includes level three body armour, a tactical helmet, tactical medical leg drop bag and tactical medical back pack and weighs a minimum of 23 kg/50 pounds.

The current SRU team consists of two EMS operations supervisors and four experienced Advanced Care level paramedics with one vehicle in service. The unit will expand to 12 paramedics (eight Advanced Care and four Primary Care paramedics) and two vehicles in service. Advanced Care paramedics are able to deliver additional potentially life-saving procedures to patients.

York Regional Council approved the formation of the SRU in 2005.

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