



Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services **NEWS RELEASE**

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Howard County Fire and Rescue Receives American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline EMS Recognition Award

Columbia, MD - The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS) has received the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline® EMS Silver Award for implementing quality improvement measures for the treatment of patients who experience severe heart attacks.

"We have exceptional emergency medical services in Howard County," said County Executive Allan H. Kittleman. "The Department is committed to innovation and continually expanding and improving the service it offers residents. I am pleased the Department is receiving this well-deserved national recognition."

Every year, more than 250,000 people experience an ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) the most deadly type of heart attack caused by a blockage of blood flow to the heart that requires timely treatment. To prevent death, it's critical to restore blood flow as quickly as possible, either by mechanically opening the blocked vessel or by providing clot-busting medication.

Unfortunately, a significant number of STEMI patients don't receive this prompt reperfusion therapy, which is critical in restoring blood flow. Mission: Lifeline seeks to save lives by closing the gaps that separate these patients from timely access to appropriate treatments. Mission: Lifeline's EMS recognition program recognizes emergency medical services for their efforts in improving systems of care and improving the quality of life for these patients.

Emergency Medical System providers are vital to the success of Mission: Lifeline. EMS agencies perform 12-lead ECGs which measure the electrical activity of the heart and can help determine if a heart attack has occurred. They also follow protocols derived from American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology guidelines. These correct tools, training, and practices allow EMS providers to rapidly identify suspected heart attack patients, promptly notify the medical center, and trigger an early response from the awaiting hospital personnel.

"EMTs and paramedics play a vital part in the system of care for those who have heart attacks," said James Jollis, M.D., Chair of the Mission: Lifeline Advisory Working Group. "Since they often are the first medical point of contact, they can shave precious minutes of life-saving treatment time by activating the emergency response system that alerts hospitals. We applaud HCDFRS for achieving this award that shows it meets evidence-based guidelines in the treatment of people who have severe heart attacks."

Agencies that receive the Mission: Lifeline Silver award have demonstrated at least 75 percent compliance for each required achievement measure for one year. In order to be awarded the Silver award the Department had to be recognized previously with the Bronze award. Next year, they will be eligible to apply for the Gold award.

"Our firefighters and paramedics are dedicated to making our service among the best in the country, and the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline program is helping us accomplish that by implementing processes for improving systems of care with the goal of improving the quality of care for all acute

coronary syndrome patients,” said Fire Chief John S. Butler. “We are pleased to be recognized for our dedication and achievements in emergency medical care for all cardiac patients.”

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