



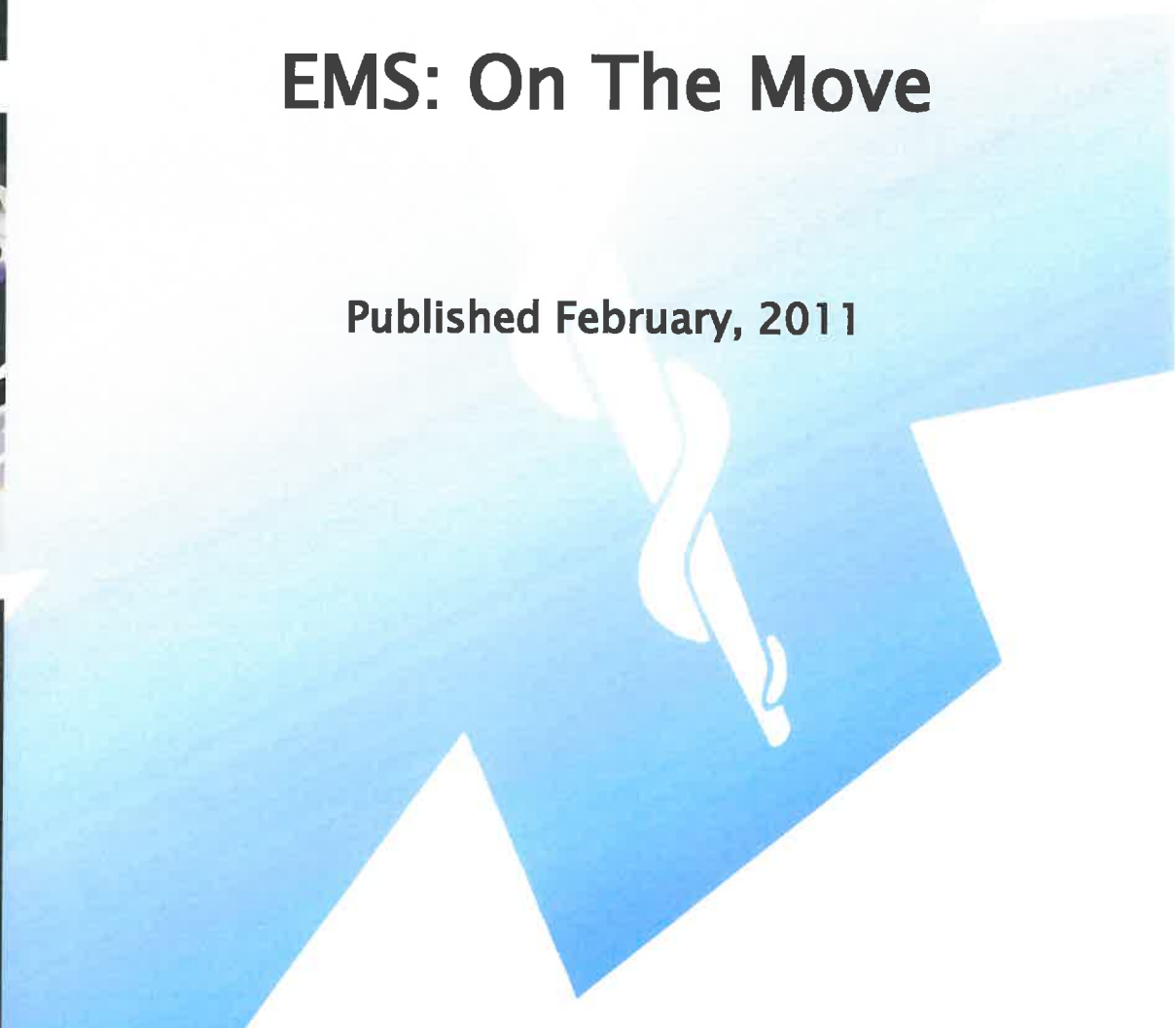
Alberta Health
Services



Emergency Medical Services Five Year Plan 2010–2015

EMS: On The Move

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Introduction

On April 1, 2009 funding and governance for ground ambulance in Alberta was transferred to Alberta Health Services (AHS) and provincial air ambulance transitioned on April 1, 2010. The development of a provincial Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system fully integrated within the overall health system is a complex task and will take some time to fully implement. The EMS Five Year Plan 2010-2015 positions EMS to move beyond current day-to-day operations and defines the overall direction, goals and priorities going forward. The plan creates a framework for decision making, provides a forum to identify potential areas of positive health system impact, outlines opportunities for innovative approaches to system issues and acts as a stimulus for change.

EMS Transition to Health

At the time of announcing the change in governance and funding for EMS, Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW) defined a number of public policy principles for the delivery of ground EMS. The principles are as follows:

- EMS must be responsive to urban and rural needs
- EMS must be aligned with the delivery of health care

- EMS must maintain a public safety role
- EMS must have active and consistent medical oversight
- EMS must have predictable and transparent costs
- Responsibility for EMS stewardship is proportionate to the funding contribution
- EMS service provision is performance based.

These principles were used to guide the service planning discussions and the development of the EMS Five Year Plan 2010-2015.

Initial work following the transition of EMS to health focused on governance, administration and contract processes. The 74 municipalities and organizations who were providing EMS at the time were given the option to either provide services under contract with AHS or transition out of providing emergency medical services.

As of December 2010, approximately 50 service providers were under contract with AHS to provide ground EMS in 79 locations. Discussions continue with First Nations Reserves to fully understand their community needs, the unique federal and provincial relationship and how we can work together to ensure effective provision of emergency medical services.

The consolidation of 35 EMS dispatch centres to three was initiated in 2009. To date, approximately two-thirds of pre-existing dispatch centres have transitioned to AHS EMS. In March 2010, the Minister of



Health asked AHS to temporarily suspend further dispatch transitions. The temporary halt allowed time for AHS EMS to complete a review of the consolidations already completed to ensure there was opportunity to strengthen the process as we move ahead. Although AHW continues to support consolidation of dispatch services as fundamental to the new EMS delivery model, the mandate to complete this consolidation within two years has been extended. AHS EMS continues to work toward an integrated provincial approach that ensures the closest EMS resource is sent to calls regardless of where the ambulance resides.

Fixed wing air ambulance service is provided through 12 aircraft located at 10 bases across the province. Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) has an affiliation agreement with AHS to provide dedicated rotary air ambulance service from bases in Calgary, Edmonton and Grande Prairie.

For the first time in the history of Alberta, all of the core components of emergency medical services are under a single governance structure and includes: emergency response and inter-facility patient transfers, ground and provincial air ambulance and dispatch services. Through effective coordination of all components of EMS, our goal is to provide quality care that is accessible and sustainable.

EMS in Alberta – Quick Facts

- EMS serves 3.5 million Albertans in a large and diversified province that is more than 660,000 square kilometres.
- EMS dispatch handles about 400,000 ambulance events each year. Approximately 30 percent of these are for inter-facility transfers (patient transfer from one health care facility to another), and 70 percent are 9-1-1 emergency calls.
- Emergency medical services are provided using a hybrid model – direct delivery and contracted services. In 2010, ground ambulance service was provided at 194 locations across the province – 115 direct delivery and 79 contracted providers.
- STARS flew approximately 1,300 missions in 2010.
- Approximately 5,500 patients were transferred by fixed wing aircraft through contracted air ambulance providers in Alberta.
- There are approximately 4,000 EMS practitioners in the AHS system (direct delivery and contracted services) across Alberta including Paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians and Emergency Medical Responders.
- There are more than 550 ambulances currently in the system across Alberta.



Service Planning Process

The EMS Five Year Plan 2010-2015 has been developed following extensive consultation. Input was sought from numerous stakeholders representing a number of organizations including EMS leadership and frontline staff, AHS, AHW, contracted service providers, Alberta College of Paramedics, other public safety agencies (such as police and fire) and the public. Tools used to obtain feedback included focus groups, focused interviews, email submissions, a web-based questionnaire and print materials.

The themes that evolved were used to determine the strategic direction and priorities. For example, a common theme that emerged was that while EMS must align itself with health, it must also continue its role in public safety.

The input and feedback received has been significant and brings tremendous value to the strategic direction. The contributions by all stakeholders have been greatly appreciated.

Alignment with Provincial Health Plan

The EMS Five Year Plan 2010-2015 aligns with the overall direction of AHS. While there has been significant change within the health system as it continues to evolve

under the provincial structure, the goal has remained unchanged: to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

Values are the core of any organization's strategic direction and are important as they help define our culture. Alberta Health Services core values are respect, accountability, transparency and engagement.

The overarching goal for Alberta is to create the best performing publicly funded health system in Canada. Alberta Health and Wellness and AHS have developed a health plan for the province: "Becoming the Best: Alberta's Five Year Health Action Plan 2010-2015". The action plan outlines five key strategies:

1. Improve access and reduce wait times.
2. Provide more choice for continuing care.
3. Strengthen primary healthcare.
4. Be healthy. Stay healthy.
5. Build one health system.

By focusing our efforts on these five areas, we will make the most impact in transforming and improving health care in Alberta.

Each strategy includes various initiatives that together will lead to system-wide improvements to meet our goals of quality, accessibility and sustainability.



EMS Five Year Plan 2010-2015

The EMS Five Year Plan 2010-2015 outlines the direction for emergency medical services in Alberta over the next five years. The plan describes our mission, values, goals, areas of focus, desired outcomes and key initiatives – aligning with the overall direction of AHS.

Mission: EMS is dedicated to:

- providing high quality, patient-focused care through skilled practitioners utilizing the unique skill set and mobility of EMS resources
- continually striving to enhance patient, public and practitioner safety
- evolving to become an integral member of the health care team with EMS practitioners working collaboratively with other health care professionals to meet changing patient needs while continuing in the role of enhancing public safety.

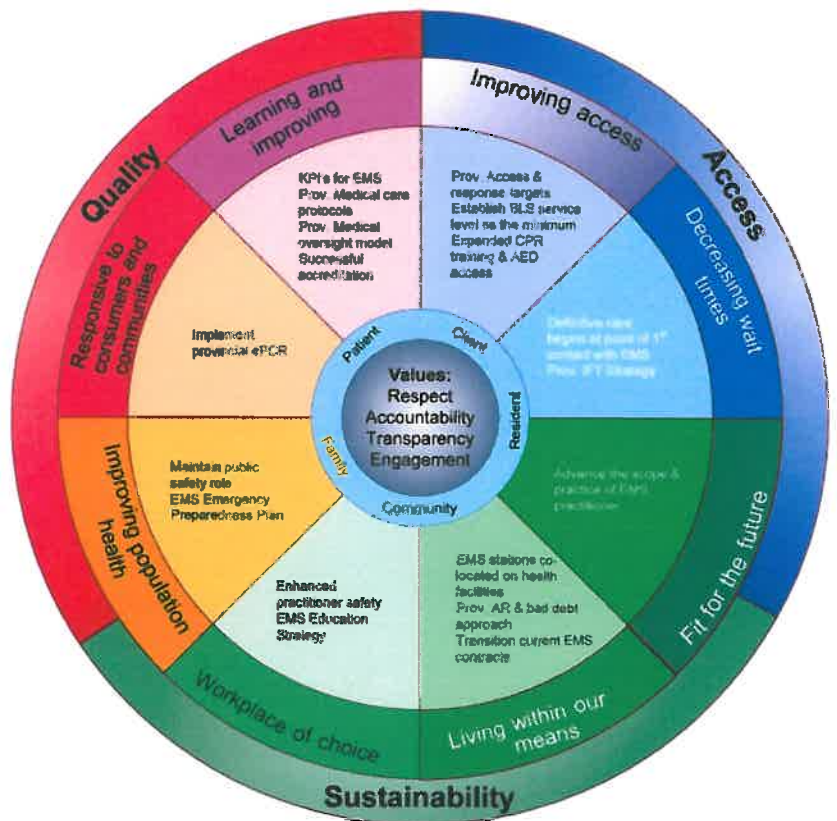
Values: Respect, Accountability, Transparency, Engagement

Goals: The EMS strategic direction is structured around three over-arching goals:

- Quality – health care services are safe, effective and patient-focused
- Access – appropriate health care services are available
- Sustainability – health care services are provided within available resources both now and into the future.

Areas of Focus: To make improvements, actions are required on many fronts. In alignment with the AHS strategic direction, EMS has eight areas of focus supporting the three goals described above. A focus area is where EMS will invest its time, energy and resources. The focus areas are as follows:

- Improving access
- Decreasing wait times
- Improving population health
- Responsive to consumers and communities
- Learning and improving
- Fit for the future
- Living within our means
- Workplace of choice.





Areas of Focus

In alignment with the AHS strategic direction, EMS has eight areas of focus. For each focus area, a number of desired outcomes have been identified.

Area of Focus	Desired Outcomes
1. Improving access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to integrate with health service planning and delivery to improve health outcomes and system efficiencies • to ensure service delivery requirements for providers are aligned with the goals of quality care • for citizens living in rural and remote areas to have appropriate access to consistently high quality emergency medical services • to have dispatch consolidated to support coordinated and efficient deployment of EMS resources • to have coordinated air and ground ambulance services.
2. Decreasing wait times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have consistent medical oversight and on-line medical consultation to support EMS practitioners and innovative approaches to care • to enable the initiation of definitive care at the point of first contact with EMS • to have an effective and efficient inter-facility transfer system that supports the coordinated movement of patients between facilities.
3. Improving population health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to become an integral component of AHS emergency preparedness processes while maintaining a strong link with local community planning and response • to align EMS health promotion and injury prevention programs with organizational priorities.
4. Responsive to consumers and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to maintain effective partnerships and communication mechanisms with fire and police services, medical first responders, public safety agencies and community support services while integrating EMS into the health system • to strengthen the provincial approach to the chain of survival by increasing the spread of public cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and enhancing access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs).



5. Learning and improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to provide equal access to consistent and evidence based care regardless of location• to have provincially standardized care protocols and a comprehensive system of measurement utilized across EMS services and aligned with other areas within health.
6. Fit for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to have a sustainable EMS delivery model that meets patient and health system needs• to fully integrate and optimize the use of practitioner skills while maintaining the core business of emergency response• to have innovative practices and enhanced continuing education processes that align practitioner skills and knowledge with patient need• to have a common integrated electronic patient health care record to foster information transfer between health professionals and enable collection of clinical outcome and performance data.
7. Living within our means	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to co-locate EMS practitioners at healthcare facilities, as appropriate, to enhance integration and improve efficiencies.
8. Workplace of choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to recruit and retain EMS staff and equip them to meet current and future care needs• to promote and enhance patient, public and practitioner safety• to strengthen EMS staff engagement by enhancing two-way communication and seeking staff input and involvement.



EMS Key Initiatives

A number of key initiatives have been developed aimed at moving EMS closer towards the goal of providing quality care and services which are accessible and sustainable. The initiatives have been grouped accordingly to the time frame for completion of the initiative:

Short Term (2010 – 2011); Medium Term (2012 – 2013); Longer Term (2014 – 2015)

<u>Short Term Initiatives (2010-2011)</u>	
#1	<p><u>Medical Oversight and Care Protocols</u></p> <p>Ensure consistent care delivery through the establishment of provincial medical oversight, including 24/7 on-line medical consultation, the development and implementation of provincial care protocols sensitive to the needs of metro, urban, rural and remote populations and addressing both ground and air ambulance requirements.</p>
#2	<p><u>Dispatch and Communication</u></p> <p>Establish a common infrastructure for communication systems, create a provincial deployment plan and create a coordinated provincial approach for EMS dispatch in an effort to support the coordinated and efficient deployment of air and ground ambulance resources.</p>
#3	<p><u>Linkage with Public Safety Partners</u></p> <p>Maintain and enhance communication mechanisms with other public safety agencies to ensure ongoing integration of EMS operations as part of the public safety net.</p>
#4	<p><u>Medical First Response</u></p> <p>Develop and implement a well-defined, consensus-based strategy to engage and appropriately utilize Medical First Responders within the provincial EMS system.</p>



#5	<p><u>Practitioner Education</u></p> <p>Develop and implement a comprehensive EMS education plan including approaches for on-line training, field training and simulation for all levels of EMS practitioners.</p>
#6	<p><u>Performance Measurement Framework</u></p> <p>Develop a comprehensive EMS performance measurement framework including, but not limited to, response times and clinical outcomes.</p>
#7	<p><u>Patient/Public/Practitioner Safety</u></p> <p>Actively promote and strengthen patient, public and practitioner safety through our approach to patient care, workplace practices and public education.</p>
#8	<p><u>Enhancing the Role of EMS (Assess/Treat/Refer)</u></p> <p>Undertake activities to shift the initiation of definitive care to the point of first patient contact with EMS. Priority activities include development and implementation of assess, treat and refer protocols, referral processes and alternative transport destinations.</p>
#9	<p><u>Integration with Other Health Services</u></p> <p>Integrate the EMS service plan with health services across the care continuum with priority focus on opportunities to positively impact Senior's Health/Home Care, Mental Health, Public/Community Health and the Emergency Departments (including Hallway care).</p>
#10	<p><u>Service Delivery Contracts</u></p> <p>Develop and implement a performance based and metric driven contracting process for future service delivery contracts with a focus on service effectiveness, participation in health system initiatives and demonstrated cost benefit. Wherever possible, base the contracts on broader geographic areas to enhance the potential for consistency in service delivery and to maximize administrative efficiencies.</p>



<u>Medium Term Initiatives (2012-2013)</u>	
#11	<p><u>Accreditation</u></p> <p>Utilize the opportunity to participate in the accreditation process as a means to embed these standards of care into the new provincial EMS system.</p>
#12	<p><u>Advancing Paramedic Practice</u></p> <p>Collaborate with the Alberta College of Paramedics, educational institutions and EMS practitioners to identify opportunities and mechanisms to advance EMS practice.</p>
#13	<p><u>Public Access Defibrillation</u></p> <p>Work with communities across the province to provide enhanced access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and to broaden first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training as key first elements in the emergency response continuum that can be provided by the general public.</p>
#14	<p><u>Provincial Air Ambulance</u></p> <p>Transition Provincial Air Ambulance from AHW to AHS and develop a plan and processes to integrate air and ground ambulance operations to enhance patient care and system efficiency.</p>
#15	<p><u>Inter-facility Patient Transfers</u></p> <p>Develop an integrated model for inter-facility patient transfers utilizing both air and ground ambulance resources, addressing the challenges of urban, rural and remote transfers and ensuring the provision of the right care through the use of the right providers and the most appropriate conveyances at the right time.</p>
#16	<p><u>Emergency Preparedness</u></p> <p>Develop and begin to implement a coordinated plan of response of EMS (both air and ground) as part of the overall AHS Emergency Preparedness Plan, articulating specific EMS roles and responsibilities.</p>



#17	<p><u>Electronic Patient Care Record</u></p> <p>Implement a provincial electronic patient care record (ePCR) system for all EMS services to support integration with the patient health record, to facilitate information transfer between care professionals and to foster collection of clinical outcome and performance data.</p>
#18	<p><u>Station Location/Resource Deployment</u></p> <p>Develop and begin to implement a comprehensive (10 year) EMS facility plan identifying appropriate station locations across the province taking into consideration optimal deployment/response times and co-location/integration opportunities.</p>
<p><u>Longer Term Initiatives (2014-2015)</u></p>	
#19	<p><u>Level of Service</u></p> <p>Undertake activities to ensure the minimum level of service is Basic Life Support (BLS), ensuring there is appropriate and timely Advanced Life Support (ALS) available through other ground or air ambulance resources or at a nearby health facility.</p>



Next Steps

The EMS Five Year Plan 2010-2015 positions EMS to move beyond the current day-to-day operations and defines the overall direction, goals and priorities for EMS into the future. The plan will be used as a compass that will guide decision making over the next number of years.

Developing the EMS Five Year Plan has been a collaborative effort and implementing the plan must be equally engaging and collaborative. Staff and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on the direction EMS is moving. Different perspectives and ideas are valued and very important to successfully moving the initiatives forward. Awareness of the EMS Five Year Plan is the first step; however, engaging key stakeholders is imperative to advancing and improving the delivery of emergency medical care and services in Alberta.

The key initiatives outlined in this plan are at various stages of development and implementation. Each initiative will have an action plan including key milestones and performance targets. To ensure we stay on course we will be actively monitoring our progress.

Everyone is encouraged to stay updated on the progress of these initiatives by visiting the Alberta Health Services website at www.albertahealthservices.ca.



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