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Rural/Metro Safety Net Covers County Fair

Erie County fairgoers form a small city of medical needs

HAMBURG, NY August 11, 2009 – Starting Wednesday and for 10 more days, the 170th Erie County Fair at the Hamburg Fairgrounds will spawn a small city, with as many as 100,000 people at peak times.

Protecting the health of fairgoers by placing them under a protective emergency medical system safety net is primarily the responsibility of Buffalo-based Rural/Metro Medical Services.

The 550-employee Buffalo division places as many as 22 trained caregivers, five ambulances, two bike ambulances and two golf cart ambulances at the Fairgrounds for peak days.

Even on quieter days, a team of 13 emergency medical technicians, paramedics and supervisors staff an on-grounds Emergency Room, and maintain at least three ambulances, as well as the more mobile bicycle and golf cart-based ones.

Planning for the Fair starts in March at Rural/Metro, which has protected fairgoers for more than 25 years.

“The Erie County Fair does an amazing job promoting and protecting the safety of all who visit,” said Rural/Metro General Manager Adin Bradley. “But in a gathering this large, accidents serious and minor are going to occur and Rural/Metro is prepared and staffed to respond. We want Fair visitors to have fun, and know we’ve got their backs – and the rest of them as well.”

A supervisor and paramedic staff the ER, just off the Avenue of Flags, behind the 4H building at the Fairgrounds, near Quinby Drive. Open from 7 a.m. to after midnight on weekends, the fully equipped ER can and has responded to serious injuries and medical conditions, stabilized patients and delivered them swiftly to the nearest hospital.

On-call ambulances are parked there, as well as one on the opposite side of the Fairgrounds near Clark Street. A team of two EMT bicyclists, carrying all the necessary equipment, is used for

quick response to medical emergencies, because they can move more rapidly through crowds of people that typically fill the Fair's roads. Golf cart ambulances, capable of carrying a patient on a stretcher, are sent to medical emergencies to ferry patients from an incident to the nearest waiting ambulance. All teams are in communication and tied in to Fair security and Hamburg's Armor Volunteer Fire Department, which is responsible for the Fairgrounds area.

"We'll average about 50 calls a day through the run of the Fair, and our people have saved lives over the years," said Russ Dimitroff, Rural/Metro's regional manager. "The logistics and planning that go into this are complex, but the goal for the team on call is the same: Keep everyone safe so they can enjoy the Fair."

"We learn lessons every year that we then are able to apply to the next year and enhance the safety of people at the Fair," he added.

Rural/Metro and Fair officials studied attendance trends over the years, and this year will offer customized staffing at the Fairgrounds. That explains the range of numbers of personnel and equipment that varies from day to day. The company also pre-deploys its bicycle and golf cart crews to areas that over the years have produced the most calls. An ambulance is also on station at the grandstand for all concerts and the Demolition Derby.

Typical complaints Rural/Metro handles include cuts and scrapes, sprains, minor injuries from falls, bee stings, and heat-related illnesses. Although rarely needed, Rural/Metro is also equipped and trained to respond to more serious complaints like chest pain or respiratory distress.

Fairgoers should know they can dial 911 or use the Fairgrounds' many public phones to call the Rural/Metro ER directly. They can also ask security personnel, who can radio for aid.

"On a given night – which is when most of our calls come – the Erie County Fair is like Amherst or Hamburg or Lancaster," Dimitroff said. "Some nights are quiet, others are busy and active. But we want fairgoers to know we're here, we're trained and we're responsive. We do everything we can to keep them protected."

More about Rural/Metro

Rural/Metro Medical Services is the premier provider of health and safety solutions in Western New York, providing services to more than two dozen municipalities in Erie and Niagara counties. Our crews respond to more than 100,000 calls every year, treating patients in every part of Western New York - from Buffalo to Cheektowaga, Niagara Falls to Lockport, Hamburg to Springville and every community in between. Rural/Metro also provides emergency stand-by service at most major area sporting and cultural events, including at Ralph Wilson Stadium, Shea's Performing Arts Center, the Erie County Fair and Dunn Tire Park, to name a few. A patient focused organization, Rural/Metro is dedicated to protecting the lives in the communities we serve. We place a premium on patient care and we believe in community trust. Rural/Metro has earned the trust of Western New Yorkers by providing safe, cost-effective and reliable ambulance service that is available 24-hours a day. This is paramount, as our crews often provide medical care to people at the most critical times in their lives. Teamwork is an important part of what we do every day. Rural/Metro believes in establishing integrated partnerships, as well as efficient customer services. We work closely with hospitals, municipalities, volunteer fire companies and other professionals every day with the understanding that community health is our common objective.