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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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### **Fire Trucks Inappropriate Substitute for Ambulances and Paramedics**

**2005/05/10** – “Transporting any patient in a fire truck is not only inappropriate; it is inherently unsafe”, according to Paramedic Association of Manitoba chairman Eric Glass. “These vehicles are not equipped to provide medical care, nor are they designed for such a purpose. The health and safety of both the patient and the paramedic are needlessly put at risk anytime such a situation exists.”

Reports suggesting that patients were transported to Winnipeg hospitals in the back of fire trucks this past weekend have prompted the Paramedic Association of Manitoba to request an investigation into such practices. “Appropriate patient treatment and safe transport are reasonable expectations for anyone in need of emergency medical services, and are of utmost importance to our Association”, says Glass. “Fire suppression vehicles are not designed to properly secure patients or allow paramedics to provide medical treatment during transport, nor do they carry the equipment needed to provide appropriate pre-hospital care.”

This is not the first time that the Paramedic Association of Manitoba has voiced concern over the use of fire apparatus to transport patients in Winnipeg. Allegations brought to the attention of the Association suggest that such incidents have occurred on a number of occasions over the course of the past four months, mainly at times when the need for ambulances appears to have surpassed the number available in the city. Glass adds “While we recognize that extraordinary events or exceptional circumstances may, from time to time, place strain on the resources of any EMS system, we cannot accept the transport of patients in fire trucks to be an appropriate contingency plan when an ambulance service gets busy. To our knowledge, no other EMS system in Canada would permit such a practice, because it’s just not safe.”

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba has suggested a number of alternatives be contemplated to ensure fire trucks no longer substitute for ambulance transports in Winnipeg. Putting additional ambulances into service, a review of emergency room admitting procedures, consideration of how ambulances are utilized during periods of high demand, and agreements with ambulance services in close proximity to Winnipeg should all be given serious consideration.

The Paramedic Association of Manitoba represents the professional interests of Emergency Medical Services practitioners to ensure the well-being and appropriate medical treatment of patients.

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