

February 15th – February 21st

During the week of February 15th – February 21st the Virginia Fire Department responded to a total of 73 calls; seven Fire calls, 23 transfers, and 43 9-1-1 EMS calls. The 23 transfers brought us to 3 different hospitals to receive patients: once to Cook Hospital, twice to Essentia Health Northern Pines, and 20 times to Essentia Health Virginia. We brought these patients to six different locations; once to Essentia Health Virginia, Miller Dwan, and United Hospital St. Paul, twice to a nursing home and St. Luke's, and 16 to Essentia Health St. Mary's. The 43 9-1-1 EMS calls brought us to eight communities for patients; once to Britt, Cook, Eveleth, and Forbes, three times to Gilbert, four times to Mt. Iron, five times to Embarrass, and 27 in Virginia. Of these 43 Patients seven of them didn't require transport; one was brought to Cook hospital and the rest, 35, of them to Essentia Health Virginia. During this week our busiest day was Sunday when we responded to 13 Medical calls. Our number one reason for dispatch was a Motor Vehicle Crash. We performed 62 different procedures and administered 47 medicines. This week we treated more women (42) than men (24) with the average age being sixty-two.

The Fire Marshall has receiving continuing education at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, by completing the "Fire Inspection Principles" class sponsored by FEMA.

During the next week the USDA will be conducting testing regarding the ability of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) at the old radio site off of 6th Ave. South. The purpose of the testing is to evaluate the ability of AFFF to perform in cold weather situations. AFFF foam is currently used for fighting fires, especially on heavily based hydrocarbon fuel loads such as fuel tankers and airplanes, but has other health and safety applications as well.

Since the beginning of the year the Virginia Fire Department has seen a significant increase in the amount of drug overdose calls. We have administered Narcan, an opioid antagonist, which works to reverse the effects of drugs such as heroin 22 times since the beginning of this year.

Heroin is a highly addictive, illegal drug. Heroin (like opium and morphine) is made from the resin of poppy plants. Milky, sap-like opium is first removed from the pod of the poppy flower. This opium is refined to make morphine, than further refined into different forms of heroin.

Most heroin is injected, creating additional risks for the user, who face the danger of contracting HIV or other infections on top of addiction.

The following may be signs of an overdose:

- Conscious, but unable to talk
- Body is very limp
- Face is very pale or clammy
- Fingernails and lips turn blue or purplish black
- For lighter skinned people, the skin tone turns bluish purple, for darker skinned people, it turns grayish or ashen.
- Breathing is very slow and shallow, erratic, or has stopped
- Pulse (heartbeat) is slow, erratic, or not there at all
- Choking sounds, or a snore-like gurgling noise (sometimes called the "death rattle")
- Vomiting

- Loss of consciousness
- Unresponsive to outside stimulus
- Small, constricted pupils
- Drowsiness
- Scratching a lot due to itchy skin
- Slurred speech

If an individual suspected of drug use is making unfamiliar sounds while “sleeping” try to wake them up. Many loved ones of users think a person was snoring, when in fact the person was experiencing an overdose. **Call 9-1-1**

If you are worried that someone is under the influence of an opiate drug, it is important that you don't leave them alone. If the person is still conscious, keep them awake, and monitor their breathing. **Call 9-1-1**

For First Responder and Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance service providers it is important to call as soon as possible for an Advance Life Support (ALS) ambulance intercept, if an opiate overdose is suspected, so the medicine Narcan can be administered to reverse the drug overdose effects.