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THE DAILY COURIER

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A big thumb up for all EMS personnel

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[JEAN GORDON](#)

We hear the sirens and from a distance we can see the flashing red lights of a Rutherford County EMS ambulance or vehicle.

Someone is in a medical emergency and help is on the way.

The EMS paramedics in Rutherford County are among the most trained in western North Carolina and can administer lifesaving techniques on the scene of an accident or in a home where someone is suffering a heart attack or stroke.

They have the technology and training to determine the extent of a heart attack and whether the patient needs to be transported by air or ambulance to hospital out-of-town. Paramedics can also notify the hospital if a heart catheterization is needed.

A serious heart attack is a Code STEMI, (Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction). Through advanced technology equipment, a patient having a STEMI is evaluated quickly.

We're focusing on EMS this week in conjunction with National Emergency Management Services Week. Through a series of stories, we plan to make our readers more aware of the tasks the paramedics each time they get in an ambulance.

One gentleman who survived a Code STEMI recently will share his story and the first responders will give their first hand accounts of the event.

I spent a little bit of time at the EMS base in Spindale last week where I learned about STEMI's and the Code Cool.

EMS paramedics can also administer cold saline through IVs at the scene if a patient in a post-cardiac arrest setting. Therapeutic hypothermia— Code Cool — is the only therapy applied that has shown to increase survival rates in cardiac arrest, says the American Heart Association.

No other EMS system in this part of the state administers the cold saline at the scene. Our paramedics spent two years training for this procedure and began the procedures in January.

I suppose until we've experienced a medical emergency first hand, we might not understand all that EMS does. We never appreciate the emergency workers until we have to call them and they roll up in our driveway or at a wreck scene.

Paramedics take all calls serious whether it be a traumatic injury or a grandmother lying in the floor who can't get up.

When a call is dispatched the trucks start rolling from either Hickory Nut Gorge, Spindale, Bostic and Cliffside.

There are 41 full-time employees and about 30 part time employees trained to respond quickly, fast and early, especially in a possible STEMI when someone's life is on the edge. Even office personnel are trained paramedics and can begin life saving measure is someone drives to the EMS station.

EMS employees tell us it is all a team effort.

Beginning with the professional dispatchers to the EMS personnel at their respective stations, any time of day or night, EMS teams roll to the scene of an accident, sick call or "an unknown problem."

Rescue crews, police, sheriff's officers, highway patrol, fire departments and traffic control, arrive on the scene and begin their work.

When you see EMS out there this week, give them a thumbs up. They deserve it more than we know.

And when you see those lights and you hear those sirens, move to the side of the road. Give that driver as much space needed to get to the emergency situation.

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