



St. Elizabeth's Ensures First Responders Equipped with Lifesaving EpiPens

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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Area ambulances are now better equipped to address allergic reactions in the field thanks to HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital in O'Fallon with a donation of 24 EpiPens.

EpiPens, which is a name-brand, is an auto-injecting device that delivers doses of epinephrine to stop severe and potentially deadly allergic reactions. In 2007, when the Mylan company bought the auto-injecting EpiPen device, the cost for a set of two auto-injectors was about \$94. Today, the cost for an EpiPen kit (a pair of two pens) is over \$700.

"Anaphylaxis is a serious, life-threatening allergic reaction. The most common allergic reactions are to foods, insect stings, medications and latex," noted St. Elizabeth's Manager of Emergency Management Brad Perry, NREMTP, FP-C. "If you are allergic to a substance, your immune system overreacts to this allergen by releasing chemicals that cause allergy symptoms."

Perry recognized that the high cost of this lifesaving treatment is often a prohibiting factor for many of our rural ambulance services, so they are often unable to carry them as standard equipment.

"For many of our rural services areas, the communities tend to have fire department or first responders who are typically volunteers and the smaller departments are very limited with funding," he said. "Because we know time is truly of the essence in an allergic reaction, the hospital chose to donate this added equipment for the safety of patients in our region and to support our health care partners in the field."

Along with these auto-injectors, training on their proper use will provide the much-needed assistance to these departments and their citizens they serve.

St. Elizabeth's is the Region 4 EMS System Resource Hospital, as designated by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), for eleven rural fire departments. As the Resource Hospital for EMS entities, St. Elizabeth's assumes responsibility for the entire EMS program of partnering agencies, including the clinical aspects, operations and educational programs. This hospital also provides medical supplies and equipment for participating EMS vehicles.

The ambulance services receiving EpiPen donations include Addieville Fire Protection District, Ashley Fire Department, Carlyle Fire Department, Coulterville Fire District, Grantfork Fire District, Highland-Pierron Fire Department, Marine Fire Department, Okawville Fire Department, St. Jacob Township Fire District, St. Rose Fire Department, and Swansea Fire Department.