



## **North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts**



July 14, 2017

### **Chief's Corner/Column: Sierra Sun and Bonanza**

*"Ambulance transport and heart blockage"*

### **Written by: Retired NTFPD Battalion Chief Pat Dillon**

Recently, a friend died from a heart attack and it got me thinking about a recurring theme with these kinds of deaths. For whatever reason, people have an aversion to ambulances. Having served as a Paramedic on both a private service and a fire department ambulance, I can't imagine why. The nicest people in the world work on ambulances and they won't force you to go if you don't want to go with them. In fact, very few ambulances in this country even charge you to come to your home and check you out when you call 911.

But this friend's loss pointed out another aspect of this issue. He suffered chest pain and radiating arm numbness. He was between the ages of 30 and 70, meeting the criteria for sudden cardiac arrest in men. He had experienced it before and had a surgical procedure that time, which saved his life. Unfortunately, this time he chose to go to the hospital with family in their car. His condition worsened during the drive and he passed away.

I am not criticizing their decision. I am here to tell you that your ambulances here at North Tahoe, Incline, Truckee, Meeks Bay, Tahoe Douglas and South Lake Tahoe are staffed 24/7/365 with Paramedics equipped with 12 lead ECG heart monitors. They are able to transmit the results of that critical test to a physician for their review instantly. Squaw Valley and Northstar have Paramedics and 12 lead ECG on their fire engines. We have been using this technology for over six years and have saved countless lives with it.

The ability to immediately see and diagnose a lethal heart blockage is life-saving and can lead to a complete recovery with few or no changes in active lifestyles. On the other hand, a delay of 20 minutes or even less can mean permanent heart muscle damage leading to lifestyle changes and decreased activity, a need to move to lower altitude and many times, death.

If you have a sudden onset of chest pain or heaviness, sudden lightheadedness or nausea and/or vomiting, pain or discomfort in arms, jaw, neck, back or stomach, and/or sudden shortness of breath, call 911.

The nicest Paramedics in the world will arrive quickly and rapidly determine whether or not you have a potentially fatal cardiac blockage or injury. They'll then offer you options of transport by ambulance or with family or a friend in the car, or a visit to your own physician if your condition is not serious.

If a possible heart attack is in evidence, they can begin the life-saving treatment in the ambulance while on the way to the facility that can quickly administer the surgical procedure to save your heart, your life and your lifestyle.



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Don't subject your family to a terrifying race to the hospital in your car while you slip into unconsciousness and your condition gets worse.

More info can be found from the American Heart Association at [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

Author: Pat Dillon is a 38 year resident of the North Shore (almost a local!).

A Paramedic for 25 years, he recently retired after 31 years at North Tahoe Fire.

*During his 31 year career, Pat Dillon worked as a Firefighter, Engineer, Lieutenant, and Battalion Chief. He has 25 years experience as a Paramedic with the District. Pat has been a resident of the north shore for 38 years, and considers himself, "almost a local."*