



JACKMAN – MOOSE RIVER FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

PO Box 911, JACKMAN, ME 04945
FIRE STATION - 610 MAIN ST — AMBULANCE BASE - 376 MAIN ST



JACKMAN REGION COMMUNITY ACCESS INTEGRATED PARAMEDIC PROGRAM FACTS & BENEFITS

Jackman – Moose River Fire & Rescue Department Chief Bill Jarvis
February 28, 2023

There has been some confusion in regard to the Jackman Region Community Access Integrated Paramedic (CAIP) program. Here is some information to help residents better understand the program.

Up through August 31, 2017, Maine General provided after-hours medical care to the community. When Maine General pulled out of Jackman in 2017, PCHC reluctantly agreed to provide after-hours medical care, however, they did not agree to provide the care for more than a few years as providing the after-hours care came at a significant cost.

That left two options for the community: (1) Find a way to provide and fund after-hours care; or (2) go without after-hours care.

Fortunately, the community chose to provide after-hours care using paramedics through a Community Access Integrated Paramedic program.

The Jackman region CAIP program is a new model which is getting a lot of attention, not only from other parts of rural Maine, but from rural areas all over the country. And the program has attracted a lot of interest from the federal government. Recently, a representative from Senator Collins' office contacted the Jackman Town Office to make us aware of a new round of Congressionally Directed Spending funds becoming available in FY2024, and our after-hours care program fits the requirement guidelines. The representative urged us to apply for the funding. Heidi at the Jackman Town Office is currently working on an application for the funding.

The Jackman region CAIP program is constantly evolving, and as it evolves, the paramedics are allowed to provide more medical services to the community. The benefits of the program are growing.

Here are the BENEFITS to the Jackman region community with the CAIP program:

- (1) The community has after-hours medical care. Although some residents in the community feel that this is not important, there are many people in our community with stories about bringing family members to the health center after-hours who are having heart issues, or who are having difficulty breathing, or are having a severe allergic reaction, and so on, and the paramedics - using telehealth with emergency room physicians at St. Joseph's Hospital in Bangor – are able to provide needed care to the patients.

Not only do the paramedics tend to patients with serious medical issues after-hours, the paramedics also tend to patients with all levels of medical issues who come to the health center after-hours. The paramedics stitch wounds, remove fishhooks from fingers and hands, treat ear infections, to list just a few examples. Without the paramedics providing any of these after-hours medical services – severe or minor - family members or friends would have to take these patients out of town for treatment, or our ambulance service would be called to take the patients to a hospital. The patients with minor medical issues would be inconvenienced. The patients with serious medical issues may not survive.

- (2) Our local ambulance service is a Basic Life Support (BLS) service and cannot provide Advanced Life Support (ALS), but the paramedics can. The on-duty paramedic frequently rides in our ambulance with a patient who needs ALS care as the patient is transported to a hospital. In fact, of the 107 patient transports that our ambulance service did in 2022, we had a paramedic on board for 78 of those 107 patient transports – 73% of the time.

On average, ALS transports in the US are about 15 to 20 percent of the total ambulance transports. However, the Jackman region has a high percentage of residents – both year-round and seasonal – who are over 50, and this results in our having a much higher number of ALS transports.

The paramedics have certainly saved many of the numerous ALS patients that they have tended to on our ambulance since the paramedics arrived in town almost three years ago.

- (3) The paramedics respond with our ambulance to calls involving patients suffering trauma in accidents, patients with chest pain, patients who are unconscious, and so on. In many cases the paramedics can provide medical treatment to these patients before they are transported in the ambulance. Medical treatment that our EMTs cannot provide.

As an example, we have had patients in accidents – both falls and vehicle accidents – who have had serious injuries and were in severe pain. Before we had the paramedics to assist us, our EMTs with our ambulance service would be as careful as possible with the patients, but moving them usually resulted in the patients experiencing excruciating pain. Needless to say, the patients did not like us very much. By having a paramedic respond to the scene, the paramedic can administer pain medications to the patients, so in just a few minutes the patients' pain level is substantially reduced. Then when our EMTs move the patients, although the patients are still in some pain, at least their pain level is more tolerable.

- (4) The paramedics have also established a Community Paramedicine program in the Jackman region where they can make home visits for wellness checks, post-surgery checks (including removing sutures), immunizations, medical evaluations, and so on, all while working with a resident's doctor via telehealth. Later this year, they plan to have a "Hospice-in-Home" program in place for our residents.

It is so much better for our residents who are seriously ill or recovering from an injury or surgery to have a paramedic come and tend to the patients in their homes as opposed to the residents having to travel a long distance to see a doctor.

- (5) The paramedics provide training needed by our EMTs. Our EMTs need an ever-increasing number of Continuing Education Hours (CEHs) to remain licensed, and although some of the training is available online, and some we can provide in-house, some of the training is difficult for us to obtain. The paramedics have provided, and will continue to provide, needed training to our EMTs so that they can remain licensed.

JACKMAN – MOOSE RIVER FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

(6) The paramedics provide CPR & Basic First Aid classes to community members. I am working with one of the paramedics now to get more classes scheduled this spring.

If the community loses after-hours care, our ambulance service will be adversely affected. Not only will there be more 911 calls for our ambulance service to transport patients who would not otherwise need transport if after-hours care was available, but we will lose patients by not having the ALS capabilities that the paramedics are currently providing. People WILL needlessly die.

And without the paramedics providing the after-hours care, we are almost certainly going to lose EMTs. We already do not have enough EMTs, and we struggle at times to get a crew together. But a couple of the EMTs have told me that the first time a patient dies on board the ambulance while being transported out of town – a patient who might have survived had there been the paramedics providing ALS care – those EMTs may quit. And being already short-staffed, the last thing that our ambulance service needs is for any EMT to quit. If this occurs, it is almost certainly a guarantee that there will be times when our ambulance service will be called, and there will be no EMTs available to answer the call.

A year and a half ago we had an EMT course in town. There were 5 people from the Jackman region who took the course. Out of those 5, we have one that may soon complete all of the testing and become an EMT. That is it. Another EMT course is set to begin on March 1st – in less than a week from when I am writing this. There are 4 Jackman region residents who signed up for the course. Based on what has occurred over the last several EMT courses that have been held, the odds are that at most we will gain one EMT. If we are lucky.

There is no doubt that having after-hours care is expensive. But as the program evolves and more sources of funding are found to cover the cost of the program, the net cost to the community to provide after-hours care will decrease.

The Community Access Integrated Paramedic program and after-hours medical care are vital to the health and safety of our isolated community. I cannot imagine living here without these services.