MEDICINE

New medical coach service to start

A new medical transfer company will start to serve the Lafayette area later this month, providing Acadian Ambulance’s non-emergency operations with competition.

Delhomme Medical Transfer Service plans to shuttle patients between their homes, hospitals and doctors’ offices.

Because Acadian Ambulance gives priority to emergency victims, transfer patients are often put on hold until a free ambulance is available, said Duane Delhomme, the company’s president. “Running a strictly medical transfer service, we hope we can alleviate the waiting,” he said.

The Delhomme family, which runs two funeral homes in Lafayette, once ran an ambulance service, until the federal government began to regulate ambulance operations in the early 1970s. Until then, it was common for funeral home directors to operate a fleet of ambulances on the side. Company vice-president Francis B. Delhomme said the new service would comply with federal guidelines.

His son, the president, added that the medical transfer company would charge fees competitive with or less than Acadian Ambulance’s non-member non-emergency rates.

Richard Zuschlag, secretary-treasurer of Acadian Ambulance, said that he did not know a new medical transfer firm was starting up.

In the past, Zuschlag has said that two competing ambulance services in a community would be counterproductive and inefficient, and that a new company entering his territory would meet with a bitter fight. Reached for comment, Zuschlag said he had not given any thought to the effect of a competing non-emergency service.