How to Call the Ambulance

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a series of articles on the operations of your ambulance service.

Acadian Ambulance Service officials say the giving of proper directions, particularly in out-of-the-way rural areas, is one of the most important things you can do when an accident or sudden illness strikes at your home. Knowledge of highway numbers and clear instructions on how the ambulance can best reach the scene can literally make the difference between life and death.

While all of us hope we will never need an ambulance, the odds in favor of it make it essential that we be prepared for the eventuality. AAS officers urge you to practice giving directions while traveling to and from your home. Note highway numbers that can identify roads. Catalogue in your mind the landmarks which would serve to guide an ambulance to your front door. Quick recall of these markers could save a life.

Other precautions include having the toll-free Acadian Ambulance Service telephone number readily available. Acadian Ambulance Service is utilizing a service being offered by the phone company called Direct Local Dialing (D.L.D.). Residents living in Ville Platte and Mamou or within 50 miles of Lafayette dial a seven digit toll free number to access an ambulance (335-6911), and a different number to reach the business office and other departments within the operation. Residents of Pine Prairie and Turkey Creek are out of this 40 mile range and will continue to call 1-800-335-5023 for all services.

In the unlikely event that you are unable to locate the emergency number immediately, dial the operator and ask for Acadian Ambulance Service. The operator will connect you to the Emergency Medical Dispatch Center, and an ambulance will be on the way immediately.

AAS spokesman recommends that you never assume someone else has already called. This could cause a serious delay. It is better to receive several calls pertaining to the same emergency than to receive none at all.

It is essential that you advise the dispatcher of the nature of the accident or injury. He needs this information to be let the ambulance crew know what to expect when it arrives. Then, the necessary medical equipment, such as portable oxygen tanks, air splints, etc., can be taken down from the ambulance at once. The dispatch center will also contact law enforcement agencies when necessary.

The next information needed is street address. If it is in a rural area, the specific directions mentioned earlier. It is best to spell out the street name, since there may be others which sound similar. Give the nearest intersecting street if possible. Having your house number or mailbox number clearly posted and visible from the road always makes the residence easier to locate.

Sometimes, in the excitement of the moment, a caller will give directions in reverse from his home to the ambulance station. Practicing directions in advance can prevent this error. It is also helpful in keeping the caller from drawing a blank when he tries to give directions.

If the scene is particularly hard to find, a name on the mailbox or the color of a car in the driveway is helpful. The dispatcher will ask for your name and phone number. This will allow him to call back if clearer directions are needed. Some people think that if they identify themselves they will be charges for the call. This is not true. Also, calling for identification helps to eliminate prank calls.

It is a difficult thing when someone you love is sick injured, but it is essential that you remain calm. This not only assures quick arrival of the ambulance service, but also reassures your patient.

When calling for an ambulance, be calm, be explicit, be accurate.