

Grand Junction Fire Department (GJFD) is the emergency and prevention service provider for Grand Junction, Colorado and the surrounding area. Its operation includes 5 stations, employing more than 125 firefighters and other personnel. Health and Safety staff responded to 10,474 calls in 2014, averaging approximately 29 medical incidents per day. The GJFD provides first responder service to a service area of 77 square miles and transport service to a large geographical area covering more than 650 square miles.

Initially the impetus to explore connectivity to Quality Health Network's (QHN) Health Information Exchange (HIE) was to access patient advance directives in the system in order to prevent unwanted medical procedures. However, the EMT supervisors have found that using the system for quality assurance purposes to improve patient care has provided additional value in their connection to QHN's HIE. "We have watched the physician providers use the QHN system for years and wondered why we are not also using this amazing community resource," says GJFD Health & Safety Chief John Hall. "We are very excited to be able to use the system to access advance directives in the HIE. However, we have found that using QHN for our quality assurance (QA) program to improve patient care and develop immediate after-call quality improvement training has extraordinary benefits."

## More Timely and Relevant Training for EMTs and Paramedics

The GJFD utilizes dual-role (EMS and Fire) personnel and single role personnel (EMS only) in the delivery of fire and emergency medical services. All GJFD firefighters are also trained to function in a medical role and are trained Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs); each primary response vehicle is also staffed with a paramedic.

Prior to connecting to the QHN systems in order to complete their QA and provide ongoing medical team training, the GJFD had to call hospitals and ask for follow-up patient information. "Every one of our service calls is reviewed for quality assurance for submission to our medical director; after review of the incident report often more information on the care provided in the Emergency Department is required. In the pre-hospital world, if you need follow-up you have to track down the providers at the hospital and ask them for the patient information, which can take months, now doing our follow-up work using QHN it is almost instantaneous."

Because GJFD is now on the QHN network they can query for data on what happened to a patient after an emergency call. The department is able to tailor EMT/paramedic training based on this real-time patient information. "The use of the HIE now touches a whole new sub-set of providers that were not being touched before. If we were a hospital based EMS system the process would be totally different. They get instant feedback from the providers in the ED. Being a government entity, we don't get that immediate feedback. With the data we get from QHN, our follow-up is now more relevant and actionable. This is helping to dramatically improve patient care."

## Plans for Additional Improvements Using HIE

GJFD is playing their part in filling in information gaps to improve patient care. "The medical field is now starting to bring in the pre-hospital side into their trauma review committees. We now sit in on the reviews of all the cases in which we were involved. We are also very close to being able to utilize QHN at the scene to pull up advance directives and real-time medical information. It's like we came out of the stone ages, into the 21st century."

Since the GJFD gained HIE access, in July, 2015, they have viewed items in the patient longitudinal record more than 2,500 times.



**John Hall,**  
**Health & Safety Chief**  
Grand Junction, CO Fire Depart.

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