

A Salute to **Silver Cross EMS System** *1975-2025*



Silver Cross Emergency
Medical Services System



Years of Service Excellence

50 Years of Exceptional Pre-Hospital Care: Silver Cross EMS System *one of the* Busiest in the State

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, ambulances were a far cry from what they are today. Patients were transported in repurposed station wagons, panel vans or hearses – the only vehicles big enough to carry a patient on a stretcher. Their contents: a simple first aid kit.

CPR was nearly impossible to perform in such tight quarters so lifesaving care “in the field” took a backseat; the real priority was getting to the nearest hospital!

But that all changed in 1973 when the national Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Act established 300 EMS systems around the country, with a focus on formal first responder training, EMS radio communications and effective ambulance design.

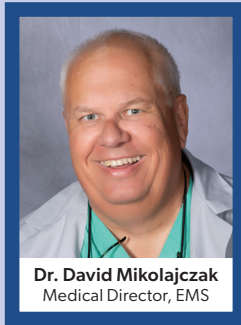
Silver Cross Hospital immediately aspired to form its own EMS System. In May 1975, the dream was realized when the Illinois Department of Public Health approved the Will/Grundy EMS System as the 10th in Illinois, with Silver Cross Hospital as its Resource Hospital. (The name was changed to Silver Cross EMS in 2012.)

While the System started with only 1 Fire Department, 6 EMS personnel, and 3 associate hospitals, today, Silver Cross EMS consists of 34 fire departments, ambulance services, and dispatch centers. Region 7, which Silver Cross is part of, includes five associate hospitals, and 2,000+ actively licensed personnel, providers, and state-of-the-art EMS vehicles.

In all, the system consists of Paramedics, EMTs, Pre-Hospital RN’s, Emergency Communication RN’s, Emergency Medical Responders, Lead Instructors and Emergency Medical Dispatchers responding to emergencies in our communities 24/7.

“When the system began in 1975, emergency medicine was in its infancy,” explains Dr. David Mikolajczak, Medical Director of Silver Cross EMS.

“As we’ve grown and matured, we’ve also changed the care we can provide. Early paramedics had minimal amounts of equipment. Today, there are advanced cardiac monitors, defibrillators, cardiac medications and other resuscitation measures in place.”



Dr. David Mikolajczak
Medical Director, EMS

Joliet Fire Department Chief Jeff Carey, a 1996 graduate of the Silver Cross paramedic program, originally set his sights on a firefighting career. But that changed when he saw the positive impact EMS providers had on people suffering life-threatening health emergencies.

“In the fire service, EMS is so much a part of what we do,” he explained. “I was assigned to Ambulance 5, and it was our busiest ambulance at the time. We started running so many calls, and you see the effect you have on people’s lives.



Joliet Fire Chief
Jeff Carey

I ended up staying on the ambulance my entire career until I was promoted to lieutenant.”

Today, every EMS professional and firefighter in the Joliet Fire Department is a paramedic, the highest level of

pre-hospital providers, and the majority were trained by Silver Cross EMS. “It’s been almost 30 years, and the stuff we did as a medic then and the stuff they’re doing now, is so much more advanced. That’s why you see medics being used more and more in hospital settings and in clinical settings, because their scope of practice has broadened.”

Silver Cross as a Resource Hospital

Silver Cross EMS provides vital support services for EMS providers 24/7, answering questions about medications, procedures, and destination decisions based on the severity of a patient’s condition.

Dr. Mikolajczak often fields these calls – even in the middle of the night. “There are emergency nurses and doctors in the emergency rooms who can help,” said Dr. Mikolajczak. “But sometimes, they’re faced with a case that’s not going as expected and need a little extra support. My cell phone is on all night.”

As the resource hospital for Silver Cross EMS, Silver Cross Hospital offers online continuing education as well as on-site training whenever possible to demonstrate new equipment or procedures. And no matter which hospital an ambulance may be transporting to, Silver Cross EMS is calling the shots!

Lockport Fire Chief John O’Connor, a 25-year graduate of Silver Cross EMS,



Lockport Fire Chief
John O'Connor

Dr. Mikolajczak noted that certain calls—especially those involving children—can be emotionally difficult for responders, even with the best training. “We have a great team here to help them through it,” he said.

Chief O’Connor also praised the EMS staff, including Marilyn Zanelli, EMS System Operations Coordinator; Program Administrative Director Jill Pateros, RN; and EMS Manager and Paramedic Program Dean of Students Lori Chiappetta, RN. “They make you feel like we’re all in this together,” O’Connor added.

Since its inception, Silver Cross Hospital has been the initial training course location for more than 3,000 Paramedics, EMTs, Intermediates, pre-hospital RNs, emergency communications RNs and emergency medical dispatchers.



added, “The Silver Cross EMS System is one of the best in the state. The education they provide is top-notch, and they are there to help whenever you need it.”

Kim Gramlich, EMS Coordinator for the Wilmington Fire Protection District, echoed that. “We called them for support when we had a pediatric cardiac patient,” she said. “It was emotional, and they knew that. They called us afterward and asked how we were doing and if we needed any further support. That makes a crew feel appreciated.”

Chances are, if you or a loved one needs an ambulance, the prehospital providers who arrive at your door have been trained by Silver Cross EMS. And as the resource hospital, Silver Cross is overseeing every step of your care, until you arrive at the hospital.

“EMS providers make a difference every day,” Chiappetta added. “Just ask the people whose lives they’ve saved.

SilverCrossEMS.com

A 50-Year History of our EMS System



Silver Cross Emergency
Medical Services System



Years of Service Excellence

May 1975 Silver Cross Hospital and the Will/Grundy EMS System obtain approval as the 10th EMS System in Illinois with Dr. Irving Rudman as EMS MD.

June 1975 The System graduates its first Paramedic class of 12 and makes plans to hold 2 to 4 classes a year to help EMS provider agencies become operational and adequately staffed. Also that year, Dr. Nancy Caroline begins work on the first paramedic training course and textbook.

1976 Lemont Fire Protection District joins the System.

1977 The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) produces the first EMT-P National Standard Curriculum.

1979 National accreditation begins, and Silver Cross EMS readies itself for the accreditation process.

1980 Dr. Rudman hands the reins over to Dr. Brent Scott as EMS MD. The System unveils its first Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Policy & Procedure manual.

1983 Will/Grundy becomes the 1st program in Illinois and 9th in the nation to earn accreditation by the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation of the American Medical Association. The revamped Paramedic class is 8 months long with 231 classroom hours, 108 clinical hours and field time during class. Channahon is the first agency in the State to achieve intermediate life support (ILS) status.

1985 Silver Cross EMS turns 10 and has grown to include 21 agencies and 4 affiliated hospitals.

1986 Silver Cross Hospital becomes a Level II Trauma Center, and the first National EMS Week is designated September 21-27, 1986.

1987 Dr. Brent Scott hands the reins over to Dr. William McConnell as EMS MD.

1990 The new Silver Cross Emergency Department opens, and in August the Will/Grundy Disaster Incident Response Truck responds to the scene of the devastating Plainfield tornado. Citgo, formerly Uno-Ven, becomes the first industrial organization in the U.S. to offer a fulltime fire department with advanced life support (ALS) service.

1995 IDPH creates EMS regions throughout Illinois to formalize responsibility, coordination and funding.

1998 The very first standing medical orders (SMO) go live in Region 7.

2000 Silver Cross EMS System celebrates 25 years and now includes 31 fire departments,

2003 An EMS Associate Degree becomes available through JJC.

2005 IDPH initiates Lead Instructor licensure.

2006 The System's first website, willgrundyems.org, goes live.

2007 Silver Cross EMS System changes to a trimester platform.

2008 Silver Cross earns approval to build a replacement hospital in New Lenox.

2009 Silver Cross Hospital's Free Standing Emergency Center opens in Homer Glen.

2015 IDPH requires dispatch centers to join EMS Systems. Wescom, Joliet 9-1-1, Lincolnway, Orland EMDA and Kurtz dispatch centers join the Silver Cross EMS System. The EMS Education Center and staff are moved to a new classroom across from the Silver Cross ER.

March of 2020 The World Health Organization (WHO) declares COVID-19 a global pandemic. For the next 3 years, EMS providers, as well as all facets of medicine, adapt to new training methods.

2022 Silver Cross EMS collaborates with area EMS provider agencies to install the STARMED backup communications system.

2023 WHO declares the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.



ambulance services,
and six hospitals with 1,200+
Paramedics, EMTs, Intermediates,
PHNRNs, ECRN, EMDs, and First Responders.

2001 Dr. William McConnell hands the reins to Dr. David Mikolajczak as EMS MD.

2012 Will/Grundy EMS is renamed Silver Cross EMS System to reflect Silver Cross Hospital's eminent role as a resource hospital.

May 2025 Silver Cross EMS celebrates 50 years of serving Region 7, training more than 3,000 pre-hospital providers along the way.

SilverCrossEMS.com



WE CARE. FOR EVERYONE.

For 50 years, Silver Cross has proudly served as the Resource Hospital for the area's largest Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System. What began in 1975 with 1 fire department, 6 EMS personnel and 3 associate hospitals has grown to 2,000+ EMS providers, 5 associate hospitals, and 34 fire departments, ambulance services and dispatch centers. During **National EMS Week**, Silver Cross Hospital and Silver Cross EMS salute all EMS providers for delivering exceptional care to every person, every time.

Fire Departments and Ambulance Services:

American Medical Response
Autobahn Country Club
Channahon Fire Protection District
Citgo Petroleum Refinery
Crete Township Fire Department
East Joliet Fire Department
Elwood Fire Protection District
Exxon Mobil Refinery
Frankfort Fire Protection District
Homer Fire Protection District

INEOS Joliet LLC
Joliet Fire Department
Lemont Fire Protection District
Lockport Fire Protection District
Manhattan Fire Protection District
Metro Paramedic Services
Mokena Fire Department
Monee Fire Protection District
New Lenox Fire Protection District

Northwest Homer Fire District
Orland Fire Protection District
Palos Fire Protection District
Plainfield Fire Protection District
South Chicago Heights Fire Department

Steger Fire Department
Superior Ambulance Service
Vital Ambulance Service
Wilmington Fire Protection District
Windy City EMS



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