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CITY AMBULANCE REFORMS

DALEY VOWS MORE UNITS, BETTER CARE

Doctors to Train Attendants

BY WILLIAM JONES
AND EDWARD SCHREIBER

Mayor Daley announced a sweeping plan to improve Chicago's ambulance service yesterday that includes an immediate 40 per cent increase in the number of fire department ambulances and the training of private emergency crews under the supervision of physicians and the Chicago fire academy.

Daley said the first phase of the plan will begin July 1, and will concentrate on improved ambulance service for the "poor and indigent."

Holds Conference

The announcement followed a two-hour meeting in the mayor's office attended by Dr. Eric Oldberg, president of the board of health, Dr. Murray Brown, city health commissioner, Fire Commissioner Robert Quinn, and Erwin France, director of the model cities program.

The plan follows a six-part series appearing in THE TRIBUNE last week which disclosed sadistic treatment of the ill and injured by some of the city's private ambulance crews.

The abuses were documented by a TRIBUNE reporter and a Better Government association investigator who worked as ambulance attendants during the two-month investigation.

Daley said during the press conference in City hall that the series "pointed out that the problems are severe and need attention."

"We also feel they do," said Daley. "And if the poor particularly are the victims, none of us are proud of it."

Change in Policy

The plan outlined by Daley includes:

1. The immediate purchase of 10 additional fire department ambulances to be stationed thruout the city according to need. Daley said the emergency call records of the present 25 ambulances will be checked to determine where the new vehicles are most urgently needed.

2. A change in fire department policy to permit firemen to transport emergency patients from their homes to the nearest hospital. Presently, fire department crews only can administer emergency treatment in private homes, and patients must call a private ambulance to get to a hospital.

3. An estimated 23 hospitals in the city soon will be desig-

[Continued on page 2, col. 1]

Ambulance Reforms Disclosed by Daley

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nated emergency centers where firemen can deliver patients, said Dr. Oldberg. The hospitals will be selected from among the 70 in the city on the basis of properly equipped, fully staffed emergency rooms.

4. Increased training for private ambulance crews under the supervision of volunteer physicians and the Chicago fire academy. At the present time, the city only requires a standard first aid course and enrollment in an advanced course to obtain a license as an ambulance attendant.

Preference to Vets

5. Preference in the training and licensing of ambulance attendants will be given to disabled Viet Nam war veterans who will be recruited thru the model cities program.

Daley said the program will not create an increased tax burden because it is aimed at better emergency care for the poor and indigent. He said payments could be provided by public aid and health insurance programs.

Oldberg said the health department is grateful for THE TRIBUNE series because it called attention to "something that has to be done. We have been studying this for some time and the stories weren't exactly a burr under the saddle, but we are grateful."

Daley said any changes in the present city ambulance ordi-

nance will emerge from hearings scheduled to begin Tuesday before the city council health committee. The committee is headed by Ald. Claude W. B. Holman (4th), president pro tem of the council.

The announcement by Daley yesterday is the most comprehensive step yet taken to correct private ambulance abuses in the city. Last week, David L. Daniel, county public aid director, ordered three ambulance companies banned from carrying welfare recipients until his office completes an investigation of the treatment of patients.

The companies affected by the ban are Mid-America Ambulance company, 5651 W. Madison st., A-Alamo, a Mid-America subsidiary at the same address; and Scully-Walton Ambulance company, 15 N. Laramie av. The three firms also are under investigation by the state welfare department. Harold O. Swank, state welfare director, last week ordered all welfare payments to the three firms halted until auditors complete an investigation of the financial records of the firms.