

# EMS Leads the Way in Promoting Window and Balcony Safety

By Heather Cairns and Dean Shaddock

When warmer weather arrives, people open their windows and move onto their balconies and decks. Many are unaware of the potential dangers associated with these areas of the home all year-round. Children are inquisitive and an open window or door is an invitation to adventure and, potentially, a tragedy. Every year, children are injured or die in falls from windows or balconies. Adults can also experience unintentional falls. Statistics from Toronto illustrate the seriousness of this issue. Between 2002 and 2006, 50 children fell from windows or balconies, resulting in nine fatalities, 18 serious or critical injuries and 23 minor injuries.

Toronto EMS entered into a partnership with the Canadian Window and Door Manufacturers Association (CWDMA) several years ago and created a program called Partners Promoting Window and Balcony Safety for Children. The program has been endorsed by the Emergency Medical Services Chiefs of Canada (EMSCC) and has been adopted by a number of EMS agencies across Canada. The program is now called Partners Promoting Window and Balcony Safety as the program encompasses all ages.

Partners Promoting Window and Balcony Safety embodies three main strategies: education, supervision and the use of safety devices. The education component for children, adults and caregivers identifies the risks and dangers associated with windows, balconies and decks. Proper supervision of children is emphasized as the single most effective measure to prevent injuries and deaths. Proper supervision also includes the responsibility for all adults to set a good example. Safety devices restrict children's access to windows and bal-



**YORK REGION EMS** paramedic, Tanya Jinkinson, educates the public on the progression of the Partners Promoting Windows and Balcony Safety for Children program.

conies. This program strongly encourages the use and proper maintenance of such devices. The National Building Code of Canada sets a standard of a 100 mm (four inches) as the maximum distance for window openings or spaces between railings to prevent a child's head from passing through, thus preventing falls. Some Canadian cities and municipalities have enhanced bylaws regarding the use of window safety devices.

## History of the Partners Promoting Window and Balcony Safety for Children Program

Several municipalities were amalgamated into the new City of Toronto in 1997. That necessitated the need to unify bylaws from the former municipalities, including those pertaining to the use of window safety devices. Toronto EMS was one of many agencies that participated in a campaign to

promote a newly unified municipal bylaw governing the use of window safety devices in the spring of 2002.

Despite that campaign in 2002, nine children from 18 months to eight years of age fell from windows or balconies between February and October. The tragic results included three deaths, two critical or serious injuries and four minor injuries. That prompted Dean Shaddock, Coordinator of the Toronto EMS Community Medicine Program, to begin development of a safety awareness program. Shortly after, Toronto EMS was invited to set up a small display at Win-door North America 2002, the trade show of the CWDMA, held annually in Toronto. The support of the CWDMA and the Win-door Show Committee has led to a number of significant achievements.

Toronto EMS returned to the Win-door North America 2003 show with a much larger display highlighting the

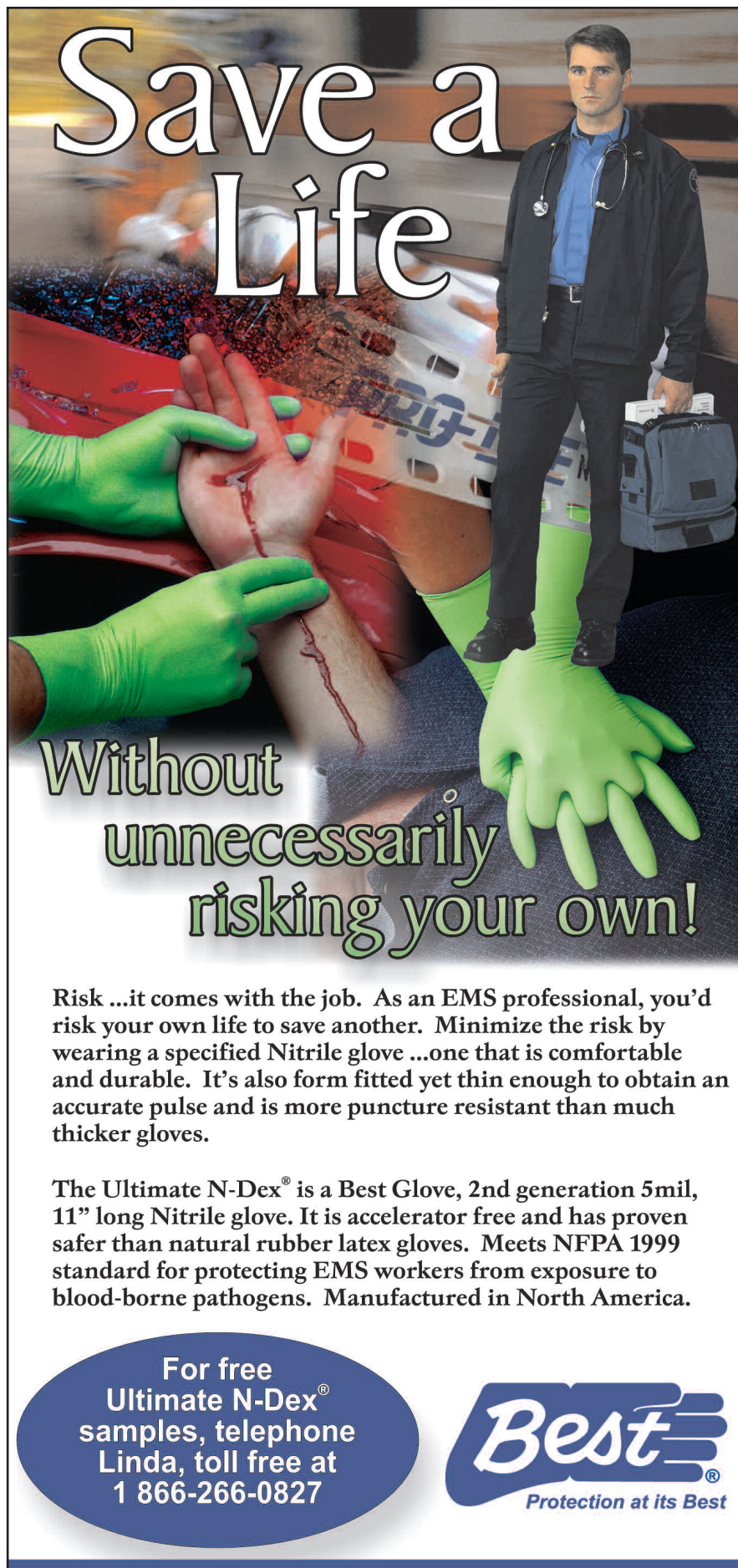
need for a targeted safety education program. Further discussion between the CWDMA and Toronto EMS identified how the two agencies could work together to promote window and balcony safety, particularly for children.

In the following months, CWDMA member companies North American Profiles Group, All Weather Windows and Truth Hardware constructed a demonstration unit for use as an educational tool. The unit was conceptualized by paramedics and represented a life-size wall with a window and balcony. It was officially presented to Toronto EMS at the opening ceremonies of Win-door North America 2004 where Toronto EMS paramedics immediately used it to enact a mock scenario of a child's fall from a balcony. That live scenario included a running commentary which explained the circumstances leading to the incident, highlighted the life-saving role of responding paramedics, described the emotional, physical (short and long-term) and financial impacts that result from such an incident and concluded with the concept that paramedics can help prevent these tragedies.

"This demonstration showed the true need for this type of program. This could be anyone's child or grandchild," stated Jim Parker, Win-door Show Chair, "This is a perfect partnership for the window and door industry to get involved with."

The scenario impacted the audience at Win-door North America so strongly, Toronto EMS later re-enacted and filmed the scenario so it could be incorporated into a 10-minute educational DVD, narrated by Mark Dailey of Toronto's CityTV and Christian Dognon of CBC Radio One, in English and French respectively. The demonstration unit and DVD have been used at many large public venues, such as the Canadian National Exhibition, and many different public events at the Air Canada Centre.

"The DVD will offer any parent, teacher or caregiver an easy and affordable way to educate children about the dangers that can be encoun-



# Save a Life

Without unnecessarily risking your own!

**Risk ...it comes with the job. As an EMS professional, you'd risk your own life to save another. Minimize the risk by wearing a specified Nitrile glove ...one that is comfortable and durable. It's also form fitted yet thin enough to obtain an accurate pulse and is more puncture resistant than much thicker gloves.**

**The Ultimate N-Dex<sup>®</sup> is a Best Glove, 2nd generation 5mil, 11" long Nitrile glove. It is accelerator free and has proven safer than natural rubber latex gloves. Meets NFPA 1999 standard for protecting EMS workers from exposure to blood-borne pathogens. Manufactured in North America.**

**For free Ultimate N-Dex<sup>®</sup> samples, telephone Linda, toll free at 1 866-266-0827**

**Best**  
Protection at its Best



**TORONTO EMS CHIEF** Bruce Farr, president of the EMSCC (far left) and Ron Vanden Brink, Chairman of the Win-door Show Committee (far right) present the new educational wall displays to (from left to right) Chiefs, Ken Luciak of Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Wes Shoemaker of Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service, Dave Dutchak of Saskatoon MD Ambulance Care Ltd., and Brad Meekin of York Region EMS Branch.

tered around windows and balconies. EMS agencies and the CWDMA will make the DVD available free of charge to anyone who would like a copy," said Heather Cairns, Toronto EMS Community Medicine Paramedic.

The demonstration unit was redesigned to make it smaller and light-weight. The original three companies and two additional CWDMA member companies, Masonite International Corporation and Meranto Technology Incorporated, used the original features of a balcony and window, then added an actual door and safety devices. This second generation version can be easily transported to schools, shopping centres, tradeshows or any public event. Educational messages and partner identification make it a useful educational tool.

The EMSCC Board of Directors held business meetings in Edmonton during the summer of 2005. Two CWDMA members, Jim Parker and Henry Banman, made a presentation to the EMSCC Board of Directors that included the first-time viewing of

the Partners Promoting Window and Balcony Safety for Children DVD. That led to a formal partnership between the CWDMA and the EMSCC. Five EMS agencies including, British Columbia Ambulance Service—Lower Mainland, Calgary EMS, City of Edmonton EMS, Emergency Medical Care Inc. in Halifax, Nova Scotia and the Ottawa Paramedic Service expressed interest in joining the program. This new partnership created the first ever national EMS program of its kind and each service received a demonstration unit at Win-door North America 2005. The CWDMA and EMSCC partnership has created the foundation for a very strong national safety awareness program that will continue to grow.

In 2006, a PowerPoint presentation was developed for instructional use in conjunction with the demonstration units. The EMSCC held its annual meeting at the same venue as Win-door North America 2006 and EMS Chiefs from the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Saskatoon-MD Ambulance Care Ltd., Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service and

York Region Emergency Medical Services were presented with a demonstration unit for their respective services. Coopérative des Techniciens Ambulanciers du Québec (Quebec City EMS) became a partner city following the show and several other EMS agencies have expressed interest since then.

The EMS display at each Win-door North America show provides paramedics with a unique opportunity to educate members of the fenestration industry about this safety program and it affords them an opportunity to showcase the valuable contribution that EMS can make in their respective communities. An attempt is made to provide a strong visual EMS presence by placing an ambulance from one of the participating EMS agencies on the show floor. Paramedics from Toronto EMS, York Region EMS and the Ottawa Paramedic Service have participated in operating a golf putting contest that has become a main attraction at the shows. "EMS is an integral part of the show. They are an expected fixture and have become part of the Win-door family," said Patrick Shield, Win-door Show Manager. Money raised through the contest is used to support the educational goals of the window and balcony safety program. Golf clubs and related prizes have been generously donated by the Callaway Golf Company. Toronto EMS looks forward to planning annual participation by its EMS partners at every Win-door North America show.

### Future Prospects

The Partners Promoting Window and Balcony Safety group is currently developing a Canadian safety brochure for release in the spring of 2007. A prospectus entitled *Increasing Window and Balcony Safety in Canadian Homes: A Position Paper* was produced for the EMSCC by Toronto EMS. The paper provides existing statistics and identifies the need for a more comprehensive national database to collect statistics on morbidity and mortality and other related issues. Additionally, the document stresses the importance of



promoting awareness and use of window and door safety devices while encouraging further support of the national efforts of EMS agencies and their fenestration and door industry partners.

"The potential for growth and development of this type of community program is tremendous. Cooperation between the Canadian EMS providers and the window and door industry will enable comprehensive education for people of all ages," said Bruce Farr, Toronto EMS Chief and President, EMS Chiefs of Canada.

There have also been preliminary but encouraging discussions with fenestration industry groups in the United States with the goal of forming a North American window and balcony safety awareness program. Some American cities have had great success in preventing these tragedies and are willing to share ideas and successes with us.

The EMSCC and CWDMA are committed to the creation and implementation of public education and awareness programs to reduce window and balcony falls in all age groups across Canada. Development of the Partners Promoting Window and Balcony Safety program demonstrates what can be achieved through the collaboration of the public and private sectors.

Groups interested in becoming involved in this program can contact us at [ems-cmp@toronto.ca](mailto:ems-cmp@toronto.ca)

Additional information can be obtained at [www.windowandbalconysafety.ca](http://www.windowandbalconysafety.ca) **E**

### About The Authors.

*Heather Cairns graduated with a BA from York University and attended Centennial College, where she completed her Certificate in Ambulance and Emergency Care. In 1995 she began her career as a PCP in Simcoe County where she worked for the Ambulance Services of Stevenson Memorial hospital in Alliston and Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. In 1999 she moved to Toronto EMS and later received her*

*training as and ACP. Presently she has been seconded to the Toronto EMS Community Medicine Program to assist with the launch of the Partner Promoting Window and Balcony Safety program.*

*Dean Shaddock has worked in EMS for 24 years. He began his career in Fenelon Falls, Ontario and four years later moved to Toronto*

*EMS where he has worked as a PCP and ACP. In 1999, he was promoted to Supervisor and acted as an ACP Instructor in the EMS Education and Development Unit and then became the first Coordinator of the Community Medicine Program, where he has been recognized by the Ministry of Health and was awarded the 2006 Innovation Award (Innovations in Health Care Expo).*



## Emergency Medical Care Inc.

EMC Emergency Medical Care Inc. is Nova Scotia's largest service provider of pre-hospital ambulance care, with over 950 employees dedicated to delivering the highest quality emergency care to local communities. Emergency Medical Care has achieved the "Gold Star" standard from the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services ("CAAS"). Our ambulance system is the first service in Canada to receive accreditation from CAAS. EMC operates under the authority of the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Emergency Health Services (EHS) and has a long-term contract to provide high performance emergency services for the Province.

### Highlights of the Service Include:

- Aggressive ALS System
- Evidenced Based System
- Annual Call Volume of 95,000
- Service area—55,000 sq km
- Population of 1,000,000
- Evidenced Based Medical Protocols
- Standardized Clinical Training Programs Status Planning
- Re-registration Allowance
- Integrated Aggressive Air Medical Transport System
- State of the Art Equipment (GPS equipped ambulances)
- Regional ALS Education Centers
- Integrated On-Line Medical Control System
- Pre-hospital Research Initiatives
- State of the Art Centralized Communications Center

## We are seeking: Advanced Care Paramedics

We offer advanced career growth opportunities for ACPs including: progression to supervisory and management positions, roles in education/facilitation, quality assurance, special projects, clinical committees, and other exciting opportunities that become available within the Company or with our Provincial Regulator, and with local educational institutions, and paramedic association(s).

Paramedics will enjoy advancing their profession as well as experiencing a quality of life living in picturesque Nova Scotia with scenic beauty—including breathtaking shores, rich heritage and vibrant culture.

### Qualifications:

- Eligible for paramedic registration with Emergency Health Services Nova Scotia (EHSNS)
- Eligible for a valid Nova Scotia Class 4 Driver's License
- Effective oral and written communication skills
- Good decision making and problem solving skills
- Committed to providing high quality patient care

## For more information call toll free 1-866-571-9147

**Candidates may be eligible for a moving allowance.** Salaries are competitive based on years of experience and level of paramedic training. Excellent benefit/pension package provided. This is a unionized environment.

### Please forward your covering letter and resume to:

EMC Emergency Medical Care Inc.  
Suite 300 – 239 Brownlow Avenue  
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3B 2B2  
Confidential Fax 902-832-1190



**Emergency Medical Care Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer**