

The Laconia Sun Daily

Ambulance docking stations at LRGH designed to reduce exhaust fumes entering emergency room



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LACONIA — For the past two decades, truck stops around the country have been equipped with electrical outlets and heating/air conditioning connections to prevent long-haul truckers from idling their engines and emitting dangerous diesel fumes for extended periods. Now, Lakes Region General Hospital in Laconia has implemented this same technology for ambulances.

After patient delivery or before patient transport, ambulances often idle for extended periods of time, sometimes an hour or more, in order to keep medical equipment charged and to keep vital medications at the proper temperature. Diesel exhaust contains a variety of toxic components including carbon monoxide, particulates and volatile organic compounds linked to asthma, emphysema and even cancer. Ironically, ambulances often idle directly outside emergency room doors where their exhaust emissions can easily travel into the emergency room.

Ambulance anti-idling kiosks look similar to gas pumps but instead of fuel, they provide a power cable that connects to the ambulance, keeping the motor battery and medical equipment charged. They also offer a window-mounted duct that supplies heated or air-conditioned air to the ambulance. These allow the ambulance to wait for long periods of time with the engine turned off.

The hospital received a \$19,000 grant from the Department of Environmental Services to partially cover the purchase and installation of two MediDock kiosks outside the emergency room. Funding came through the federal Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) of 2008 that appropriated funds for diesel emissions abatement efforts throughout the U.S.

Angela Drake, Director of Environmental Compliance and Waste Stream Management, stated that with the success of the anti-idling kiosks, emissions from ambulance idling will be cut drastically and someday, be a thing of the past.