



Northville Plymouth Fire Advisory Board Meeting Agenda

Monday, November 6, 2023 4:00 p.m.
Northville City Hall 215 W. Main St.

1. Roll Call: Chair Marques Thomey, Members George Lahanas, Jim Rachwal, Paul Sincock, Brian Turnbull
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes for August 7, 2023
3. Fire Inspection Report
4. Training Report
5. Personnel Staffing Report
6. Run Volume Report
7. Review Response Times
8. Financial Report
9. Review of Articles
 - Making a Plan for Succession
 - The EMS Economic and Staffing Crisis Creates an Opportunity for Improved System Design
 - First Responders from Five Counties Hold Train Derailment Exercises
 - Dearborn, Ann Arbor Agree to Rent Each Other's Fire Equipment on Emergency Basis
10. Next Meeting Date
11. Adjournment



Northville Plymouth Fire Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 7, 2023 4:00 p.m.
Northville City Hall

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Marques Thomey, Members George Lahanas, Jim Rachwal, Paul Sincock

Also Present: Fire Chief Matt Samhat

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Sincock made a motion, seconded by Rachwal, to approve the minutes of the May1, 2023 meeting.

MOTION PASSED

3. FIRE INSPECTION REPORT

Samhat provided an update and there was a discussion about using Allen Prieur more in Northville.

4. TRAINING REPORT

Samhat reviewed the training report for both stations. He said they plan to attend a Washtenaw County Haz-Mat event on August 16.

5. PERSONNEL STAFFING REPORT

Samhat said he was working toward an in-house EMT academy, and that they need an accredited agency to run it. He said the command staff promotions would be posted in September.

6. RUN VOLUME REPORT

Samhat reported that in the second quarter of 2023, station one received 195 calls for service, and station two received 318.

7. REVIEW OF RESPONSE TIMES

The group reviewed the 2023 second quarter response times provided by Samhat. The average call-to-arrival response time at Station One was 6:58, with a dispatch-to-arrival time of 5:56. At Station Two, the average call-to-arrival response time was 7:28, and the dispatch-to arrival-time was 6:25. Samhat said staffing the two stations has decreased the response times.

8. FINANCIAL REPORT

The group reviewed the financial report provided by the City of Northville.

9. REVIEW OF ARTICLE – THE WAIT FOR AN AMBULANCE MIGHT GET LONGER FOR SAFETY

10: NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be on Monday, November 6, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. at Northville City Hall.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Sincock offered a motion, seconded by Lahanas, to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION PASSED

Year Ended 06/30/2024

Department: Multiple

1ST QUARTER BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Fund 101 GENERAL FUND

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	ADOPTED BUDGET	QTR 1 AMENDMENTS	QTR 2 AMENDMENTS	QTR 3 AMENDMENTS	QTR 4 AMENDMENTS	FINAL AMENDED BUDGET	YTD ACTUAL	PCT OF BUDGET USED
DEPT: 337-FIRE ADMINISTRATION - NV & PLY									
101-337-702.000	VEHICLE ALLOWANCE	6,000	0	0	0	0	6,000	2,000	33.33
101-337-706.140	WAGE/SAL - ADMINISTRATION	10,805	0	0	0	0	10,805	3,119	28.87
101-337-707.000	WAGES - REGULAR OVERTIME	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0.00
101-337-708.010	WAGES - CHIEF & OFFICERS	84,030	0	0	0	0	84,030	21,800	25.94
101-337-708.030	WAGES - TRAINING AND OTHER	90,560	0	0	0	0	90,560	27,948	30.86
101-337-716.000	DISABILITY INCOME INSURANCE	6,500	0	0	0	0	6,500	6,153	94.66
101-337-725.000	FRINGE BENEFITS	59,225	0	0	0	0	59,225	21,450	36.22
101-337-744.000	UNIFORMS & CLOTHING	10,500	0	0	0	0	10,500	(3,490)	(33.24)
101-337-801.000	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	2,500	0	0	0	0	2,500	0	0.00
101-337-801.190	TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT & SERVICES	20,000	0	0	0	0	20,000	3,330	16.65
101-337-802.010	LEGAL SERVICES - GENERAL	250	0	0	0	0	250	208	83.20
101-337-802.030	LEGAL SERVICES - LABOR	250	0	0	0	0	250	5,072	2,028.80
101-337-804.010	EMPLOYEE PHYSICALS & DRUG TEST	15,000	0	0	0	0	15,000	799	5.33
101-337-828.000	MEDICAL/CERT RENEWALS	460	0	0	0	0	460	38	8.30
101-337-853.000	TELEPHONE/COMMUNICATIONS	3,600	0	0	0	0	3,600	950	26.40
101-337-938.000	LAUNDRY & CLEANING	550	0	0	0	0	550	0	0.00
101-337-956.000	CONTINGENCIES	10,000	0	0	0	0	10,000	0	0.00
101-337-958.000	MEMBERSHIP & DUES	1,975	0	0	0	0	1,975	0	0.00
101-337-960.000	EDUCATION & TRAINING	9,600	0	0	0	0	9,600	3,309	34.47
101-337-960.030	CONFERENCES & MEETINGS	300	0	0	0	0	300	0	0.00
101-337-962.000	LIABILITY & PROPERTY INSURANCE	3,000	0	0	0	0	3,000	2,406	80.20
TOTALS FOR DEPT 337-FIRE ADMINISTRATION - NV & PL		335,105	0	0	0	0	335,105	95,104	28.38
DEPT: 339-FIRE OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE - NV & PL									
101-339-708.000	WAGES - FIRE/MEDICAL RUNS	440,085	0	0	0	0	440,085	144,201	32.77
101-339-708.020	WAGES - MUTUAL AID	30,000	0	0	0	0	30,000	7,411	24.70
101-339-708.040	WAGES - STATION COVERAGE/INSPE	94,280	0	0	0	0	94,280	0	0.00
101-339-708.060	WAGES - SHIFT STAFFING	140,690	0	0	0	0	140,690	38,649	27.47
101-339-725.000	FRINGE BENEFITS	80,025	0	0	0	0	80,025	22,838	28.54
101-339-726.000	SUPPLIES	45,850	0	0	0	0	45,850	16,056	35.02
101-339-775.800	AUTOMOTIVE PARTS	3,000	0	0	0	0	3,000	0	0.00
101-339-775.900	FUEL & OIL	250	0	0	0	0	250	0	0.00
101-339-801.020	AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE	21,000	0	0	0	0	21,000	9,158	43.61
101-339-934.000	RADIO MAINTENANCE	3,500	0	0	0	0	3,500	0	0.00
101-339-962.500	VEHICLE INSURANCE	8,230	0	0	0	0	8,230	5,550	67.44
TOTALS FOR DEPT 339-FIRE OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE		866,910	0	0	0	0	866,910	243,863	28.13
DEPT: 344-NORTHVILLE STATION ADMIN & OPERATIONS									
101-344-708.080	WAGES - SPECIAL EVENT COVERAGE	3,705	0	0	0	0	3,705	2,865	77.32
101-344-725.000	FRINGE BENEFITS	420	0	0	0	0	420	331	78.86
101-344-726.000	SUPPLIES	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,047	0.00
101-344-775.900	FUEL & OIL	4,300	0	0	0	0	4,300	2,137	49.70
101-344-801.000	CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	4,000	0	0	0	0	4,000	914	22.86
101-344-829.000	MUTUAL AID/EMS PARTICIP. FEES	3,980	0	0	0	0	3,980	3,955	99.38
101-344-874.000	UNFUNDED PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS	15,705	0	0	0	0	15,705	7,851	49.99
101-344-943.080	HYDRANT RENTAL	10,145	0	0	0	0	10,145	1,691	16.67
101-344-962.500	VEHICLE INSURANCE	19,930	0	0	0	0	19,930	13,591	68.19
TOTALS FOR DEPT 344-NORTHVILLE STATION ADMIN & OP		62,185	0	0	0	0	62,185	34,382	55.29
DEPT: 347-PLYMOUTH STATION ADMIN & OPERATIONS									
101-347-708.080	WAGES - SPECIAL EVENT COVERAGE	13,175	0	0	0	0	13,175	8,195	62.20
101-347-725.000	FRINGE BENEFITS	1,495	0	0	0	0	1,495	947	63.37
101-347-829.000	MUTUAL AID/EMS PARTICIP. FEES	4,500	0	0	0	0	4,500	4,461	99.14

QUARTERLY BUDGET AMENDMENT REPORT FOR CITY OF NORTHVILLE
 Year Ended 06/30/2024
 Department: Multiple
 1ST QUARTER BUDGET AMENDMENTS
 Fund 101 GENERAL FUND

GL NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	ADOPTED BUDGET	QTR 1 AMENDMENTS	QTR 2 AMENDMENTS	QTR 3 AMENDMENTS	QTR 4 AMENDMENTS	FINAL AMENDED BUDGET	YTD ACTUAL	PCT OF BUDGET USED
101-347-874.000	UNFUNDED PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS	2,245	0	0	0	0	2,245	1,122	49.96
101-347-962.000	LIABILITY & PROPERTY INSURANCE	450	0	0	0	0	450	390	86.67
TOTALS FOR DEPT 347-PLYMOUTH STATION ADMIN & OPER		21,865	0	0	0	0	21,865	15,115	69.13
TOTAL Expenditures		1,286,065	0	0	0	0	1,286,065	388,464	30.21
TOTAL FOR FUND 101									
REVENUES:		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
EXPENDITURES		1,286,065	0	0	0	0	1,286,065	388,466	30.21
NET OF REVENUES vs. EXPENDITURES		(1,286,065)	0	0	0	0	(1,286,065)	(388,466)	30.21

Making a Plan for Succession

by Doug Griffiths | Sep 5, 2023 | Community Development

In 1736 Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin created what is thought to be the first volunteer fire department in the United States. Named the Union Fire Company, it had 30 firefighters and Franklin was its chief. His mission was to protect the properties of all citizens, not just those who had paid money to insurance companies.

Franklin's egalitarian fire department and those like it at the time set the pattern for the hundreds of thousands of volunteer firefighters who would selflessly serve their communities in the centuries that followed. Nothing epitomizes community spirit quite like being a volunteer firefighter. However, volunteer fire departments are facing problems, even a crisis in some areas. It's all to do with attracting and keeping volunteers.



According to a May, 2023 report by the U.S. Fire Administration, "Headlines from communities across the country proclaim that departments have reached a crisis point and that some may have to close if they cannot find more volunteers quickly." It's a problem just about anybody who deals with any kind of volunteer activity can relate to, particularly in rural communities.



In this excerpt from the Fire Administration's report, you only need replace the word "firefighter" with the name of pretty much any volunteer job in your community: "Volunteer departments tend to have a higher proportion of firefighters over the age of 50, and in some rural areas it is not uncommon to find volunteers in their 60s or 70s. About one-third of small-town firefighters are 50 or older."



Sound familiar?

Of course, becoming a firefighter requires more training, and exposure to more danger, than, say, someone volunteering to run a summer day camp for kids. But volunteers, whatever their role, are the heart and glue of a community. The fire administration's report urges departments to create workforce plans to attract and retain volunteers – and points out "workforce planning is also critical for planning staff training needs and succession planning."

Here are two keywords that cannot be emphasized enough: "succession planning." It's certainly not a new concept.


Succession planning is an important concept in agriculture. There are tax specialists who help farmers and ranchers plan for the transition of their land and animals to the next generation. Without proper succession planning, the tax implications can be disastrous. Corporations also have some kind of succession plan to help keep the company alive and prosperous well into


the future. Those corporations have succession plans for the business their products, their services, **and the leadership** of the corporation.


Too often, though, we don't think in those terms when it comes to our own community.


We have witnessed communities where one person serves as the mayor for two decades in a row. When asked why they continue to serve for so long, they invariably say that no one else steps up so they must keep filling the role. The irony is that no one steps up because the incumbent doesn't leave.

It's the same with community volunteers. We all know the quintessential volunteer who has nothing but the community's best interests at heart and so they take on every volunteer role imaginable. And over time no one else steps up to take over those roles or fill those positions. Consequently, that one person keeps stepping back into that same role, yet often the reason no one new steps up to take over the role is because the role is never vacated.

 The role of the volunteer or the organization becomes synonymous with that one volunteer's name, brand and reputation. No one else feels like they can do the role. And even though that amazing selfless volunteer wants someone else to take over, they often want them to take over and do exactly the same thing that they've been doing. Except who wants to take over a role to do things exactly the way the predecessor did? There isn't only one right way to do things. And new ideas can help add a new freshness to events and organizations.

 Or, perhaps, nobody steps up to volunteer because they think the current volunteer doesn't need help. That's what happened with the one volunteer caring for the 200-year-old Dorchester Rural Cemetery in New Brunswick. Peter Spence became secretary-treasurer of the cemetery's board in 1992 but over the years the other board members died and he was left as the "face of the cemetery."

 "It became a very lonely job," Spence told the Canadian Press last May. But his biggest concern was finding a replacement. He was 75 and afraid nobody would step up to look after the 1,300 plots that include the burial sites of important figures from Canada's past.

 He and the community were fortunate. One of his friends organized a community meeting where 20 people turned up. Eight of them volunteered to help with the landscaping and other maintenance work. One of them, Bob Hickman, said they're working on a succession plan to attract younger people: "I think we're one of many cemeteries that are finding themselves at that point where the older people are passing on, and there doesn't seem to be a groundswell of interest or people interested in preserving the past or the cemeteries as we know them."

That's the challenge.

As anyone who has tried to recruit volunteers knows, the recruitment itself is a full-time job. And it's getting more difficult. The pandemic disrupted volunteer work and many organizations

say volunteers who left haven't come back. According to a March edition of *The Philanthropist Journal*, volunteer agencies large and small across Canada reported a decrease in volunteer participation during the pandemic and difficulty getting people to return: "'We're at a tipping point here,' says Andrea MacDonald, CEO of United Way PEI. 'In rural areas especially, the same people are being asked to sit on every board and service club.'"

Indeed, there are volunteers who do sit on every board and service club. We like to refer to them as the STPs – the Same Ten People. Some do it because they feel they have to, others because they want to. But that's a trap. As a community we have become too reliant on too few volunteers. They are amazing people but part of a good succession plan for volunteer organizations in small-to-medium sized communities is to have a revolving door of sorts.

It takes a conscientious and deliberate effort from those amazing volunteers to step down and make a space, create a vacuum, where others have to step in. A competent, reliable and energetic volunteer can't simply wait to be kicked out of the job. There is too much respect for that volunteer and the brand and reputation they have. They need to make one more selfless act: volunteer to step back and create a vacuum that allows new people to step into the role.



They need to do that in a way that lets those new volunteers change things, try new things, put their own brand on that volunteer role. If not, those volunteers will quickly leave because no one wants to be micromanaged, criticized, and told what to do. They want to be a leader in their community, a leader and a volunteer, and they need to be given space to contribute, not to maintain the status quo and the name of their predecessor.



This is especially true of younger people.



In the *Philanthropist Journal* article, Vicki Stroich with Caravan Farm Theatre in British Columbia says organizations need to realize just how the pandemic "has thrown the concept of certainty out the window and that charities and nonprofits have to shift expectations and systems accordingly."

"If we are having a problem engaging young people in our work, is it the young people's problem or our own outdated modes of thinking and working?" asks Stroich. One of the challenges to attracting young people is that nowadays they tend to look at volunteerism less as a traditional commitment to regular hours at a particular agency and more as a drop-in activity when they have time.

This is a major problem for succession planning. But there's no getting around it according to a May 7, 2023 article published by the *Voice of America* entitled, "Volunteerism is changing in the United States."

"Nonprofits will need to adapt to this," said Robert Ashcraft, executive director at the Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation at Arizona State University, "especially if

they want to bring in young people who want to contribute but not through traditional means.”

But there's an upside, according to Ashcraft: “with their optimism and energy, young people will also want to bring their ideas to volunteerism, whether it involves climate change, education, the arts and culture.”

We need to make space for new volunteers, particularly young ones. We all know selfless people who are stellar volunteers in their community. However, because of their reputation, and their tireless volunteerism, anyone who might want to volunteer stays on the sidelines. Invariably, everyone complains that no new volunteers are stepping forward.

We need an infusion of new blood. We need a succession plan – a real succession plan that allows for not just new volunteers but new volunteer leaders. We don't need them to carry on a legacy; we want them to create their own legacy.

That's how we will create better communities.



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Making a Plan for Succession

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Building Community

Business

The EMS Economic and Staffing Crisis Creates an Opportunity for Improved System Design

Using data to evaluate your community's EMS costs, ambulance staffing levels, and response time expectations to help prevent your EMS systems from collapsing.

by Matt Zavadsky | Oct 01, 2023 | PM MAGAZINE - ARTICLE



Fifty-five. That's how many communities lost their ambulance provider in the past two years, according to local and national media reports tracked by the American Ambulance Association (AAA) and the Academy of International Mobile Healthcare Integration (AIMHI). That media tracking system has identified 1,089 local and national media stories focused on emergency medical services (EMS). Of these, 641 (59%) highlighted the EMS staffing crisis and 363 (33%) highlighted the EMS economic crisis. Common sense tells us those two themes are likely linked.

This article will articulate the extent of the root causes of the EMS delivery crisis, as well as the steps many communities are taking to help prevent their EMS systems from collapsing.

EMS Economics 101

EMS agencies are funded typically from two sources: fees for services provided and public funding (i.e., tax subsidy). If the cost of operating the system is greater than the fees generated from service delivery, a tax subsidy will most likely be required. Fee for service reimbursement for EMS comes from several sources: Medicare, Medicaid, commercial insurance, or the patient. The percentage of patients in your community covered by insurance, and the insurance type, is referred to as the "payer mix." Medicare generally reimburses less than the cost of providing the service, and Medicaid reimburses even less than Medicare. Commercial insurers are generally required to pay a percentage of the usual and customary rate (UCR), typically 80%, but the determination of the UCR is left up to the insurer, resulting in a classic "fox watching the hen house" scenario.

When an insurer underpays the cost of ambulance service, the patient is often sent a "balance bill," the balance of the ambulance bill remaining after insurance pays what they want to pay. Balance billing has been a point of consternation for consumer advocacy groups for years. Often called a "surprise bill," perhaps the term could be more appropriately called a "surprise payment." Oh, and patients without health insurance (about 20% of the payer mix in most communities) generally do not pay their ambulance bill at all.

Here's an example of how this works. Anytown, USA, has a fire-based ambulance service. The community of 10,000 people generates 1,100 EMS calls and 825 transports annually. (Not all responses result in a patient being transported to the hospital.) To effectively respond to those 1,100 EMS calls, the fire department staffs one ambulance 24 hours per day. This ambulance costs \$850,000 a year to staff and operate. Simple math reveals that the *cost per call* for Anytown Fire Department (FD) is \$772.73 (\$850,000 divided by 1,100 calls) and the *cost per transport* is \$1,030.30 (\$850,000 divided by 825 transports). Since EMS is only paid for transport, to break even, Anytown FD would need to generate, on average, \$1,030.30 of revenue per transport. Anything less than that amount would require a tax subsidy to cover costs. For point of reference, the average Medicare reimbursement for an emergency ambulance call is \$480, and Medicare typically represents about 40% of an EMS agency's payer mix.

EMS Workforce and Economic Crisis—Connected!

The most expensive part of EMS service delivery is the cost of readiness, that is, having enough resources *available* (i.e., not committed to a response) to meet the community's desired 911 EMS response time. Personnel costs are the largest investment for an EMS agency, regardless of the agency type (fire-based, third governmental service, private, etc.) The shorter the desired response time, the more "ready" units that are required to be standing by waiting for a call, meaning higher cost. The longer the desired response time, the fewer units that will need to be ready to respond, meaning lower cost.

ICMA members are aware of what's been happening to wages prior to, but more significantly after, the pandemic. The national workforce shortage is affecting virtually every profession, and EMS is no exception. However, the demand for EMTs and paramedics has grown dramatically, which has resulted in wages for EMS workers skyrocketing much faster than the general market. The demand increase is rooted in two main factors. First, volunteer agencies are less able to attract and retain volunteers, and as result, they are hiring EMTs and paramedics. Second, hospitals, saddled with their own nurse staffing crisis, are alternatively hiring EMTs and paramedics to work in hospitals and other healthcare settings. In Fort Worth, Texas, the average wage for a paramedic is \$30/hour. A local hospital recently advertised for paramedics to work in their emergency department at \$48/hour to start, with an \$8,000 sign-on bonus. A local fire department recently advertised for paramedics to staff their ambulances at a starting annual salary of \$90,000 (\$31/hour) with a \$10,000 sign-on bonus. This is what is driving up 70% of the cost of providing EMS.

To make matters worse, the pipeline for certified EMTs and paramedics is drying up. Many training programs shut down during the pandemic, decreasing the number of people able to become certified. And many people making career choices weigh the work-life balance of a 24/7, nights and weekends EMS schedule, time away from family and friends at holidays and life events, plus the risk of death. A career in EMS is not favorable to a work-life and personal safety balance, especially when compared with the frequent utilization of work-from-home hours in other industries.

The EMS staffing crisis is across all types of agencies. Baltimore, Maryland's fire department was recently the subject of media reports regarding poor EMS response performance, and they cited staffing as the major cause.

To attract people to EMS, the wages must be significantly higher than they can get paid working at Amazon or Walmart. That drives up costs.

Additionally, costs are dramatically increasing for ambulances, equipment, supplies, medications, and everything else it takes to run an EMS agency. A recent survey by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians revealed cost increases for these essential items of over 12% since 2019. Despite skyrocketing expenses, the reimbursement rates for EMS from Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial insurers have been essentially unchanged for years.

Approaches to EMS Redesign for Sustainability

Necessity is the mother of invention, and crisis makes the previously unthinkable acceptable. Many innovative EMS systems are making logical, evidence-based system design changes to help mitigate the economic and workforce crisis.

Tiered Deployment

Many systems put a paramedic on every ambulance, sometimes even two. The reality is that most EMS calls do not require Advanced Life Support (ALS) care, and even fewer calls are truly life-threatening. The Metropolitan Area EMS Authority, the public EMS agency better known as MedStar Mobile Healthcare, in Fort Worth, Texas, recently reviewed over 400,000 911 EMS responses and found that only 2.05% of the patients received potentially life-saving medical interventions, and only about 30% received ALS care. This means that for most EMS responses, a Basic Life Support (BLS) response, comprised of two EMTs on the ambulance, would be more than fine. Since EMTs are more available for hire than paramedics, you can increase your staffing by hiring and deploying BLS units with EMTs to respond to calls not likely to require ALS care (most of the calls).

Houston Fire Department staffs 56 of its 103 daily staffed ambulances (54%) at the EMT/BLS level. The Colorado Springs Fire Department recently won an Excellence in EMS Award from the Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) for the innovative practice of sending a community paramedic only to low-acuity 911 calls and not sending an ambulance unless the community paramedic requests the ambulance response. This preserves ambulance resources for higher acuity calls.

MedStar implemented a tiered deployment model in 2022. Since then, the average daily staffing of ambulance unit hours (a “unit hour” is one ambulance on duty for one hour) covering MedStar’s 430 square mile, 1.1 million population service area jumped from 752 in 2021 to 871 in 2023. This has reduced personnel workload and helped mitigate a rising cost per unit hour. A recent benchmark survey of AIMHI members revealed that 36% of the member systems have transitioned from an all-ALS ambulance deployment to a tiered deployment (ALS/BLS) to better match resources with EMS response needs and enhance ALS provider utilization and experience.

Right-Sizing Response Times

The vast majority of 911 EMS responses are for patients not experiencing life threatening medical issues, and, as we know, the biggest cost driver for EMS delivery is response times. In recent months, some innovative, data-driven EMS systems have changed response time goals based on the acuity of the patient, with life-threatening calls still getting the shortest response times (10 minutes or less) and very low-acuity calls having longer response time goals. In October 2021, the response time goal for a subset of low-acuity 911 EMS calls in Charlotte, North Carolina, was changed to 60 minutes. According to John Peterson, executive director of MEDIC, the Mecklenburg County public EMS agency, they’ve responded to 21,000 EMS calls over the past 20 months that met criteria for the 60-minute response time goal with no adverse patient outcomes. And, they have received minimal complaints about the response time. Peterson credits the low complaint rate with the practice their 911 call takers use when taking a call that is determined to be low priority. They inform the caller that their call is important to them, and they will be there within the hour, and that if anything changes, to call 911 back. This practice sets the caller’s expectations to the response time goal.

Very, very few 911 calls for EMS are for life-threatening emergencies that require a fast response and advanced life support care — generally less than 10%.

To further focus on maximizing response times for high-acuity calls, in April 2023, MEDIC implemented widespread response configuration changes based on the initial learning to include low-acuity response time goals ranging from 15 minutes up to 90 minutes depending on the Emergency Medical Dispatch Pro-QA determinant.

In Richmond, Virginia, to control rising public expenses for the public EMS agency, the Richmond Ambulance Authority is implementing a similar plan, with low-acuity 911 EMS responses having a response time goal of 60 minutes.

Balancing Service Level with Economics

The EMS economic crisis leaves communities with a tough decision to make: maintain current service levels and increase (or initiate) public funding or use evidence-based processes to modify service levels based on actual data from the community. With response times being the largest cost driver for EMS, this will likely mean changing response time expectations for some low-acuity calls and using the right response plans based on patient need.

Community leaders should keep two important things in mind when engaging in discussions regarding EMS performance goals. First, very, very few 911 calls for EMS are for life-threatening emergencies that require a fast response and advanced life support care—generally less than 10%. Prioritizing patients based on clinical need has been done in hospital emergency rooms for decades. In the ER, patients with low-acuity conditions wait, sometimes for quite a while, while higher-acuity patients are treated. Twenty-seven percent of the patients MedStar brings to their large public hospital by ambulance following a 911 call are brought directly to the waiting room to wait, just like those who walked into the ER.

Second, most studies that have been done comparing ambulance response times to patient outcomes have found no difference for any response time greater than five minutes, and the five minutes only matters on about 2% of EMS responses. A frank, transparent, and data-driven community conversation regarding things like costs, ambulance staffing levels (ALS vs. BLS), and response time expectations can help build support for logical EMS system redesign.

We often say that the community expectation regarding EMS service levels, especially response times, is the intersection of what your wallet can withstand and your stomach can bear. Be strong, be bold, and lead!



MATT ZAVADSKY is senior manager, EMS, of the [Center for Public Safety Management, LLC](#).

N7FAB

Watch Live

First responders from 5 counties hold train derailment exercises

By Brandon Hudson and David Komer | Published August 16, 2023 9:29PM | Ypsilanti | FOX 2 Detroit |

First responders hold train derailment drills in Ypsilanti

For the first time since before the pandemic, first responders from five surrounding counties are training for the possibility of a train going off the tracks

YPSILANTI TWP., Mich. (FOX 2) - Southeast Michigan first responders worked with Norfolk Southern to prepare for the worst-case scenario of an East Palestine type-derailment.

For the first time since before the pandemic, first responders from five surrounding counties are training for the possibility of a train going off the tracks

"A lot of people have retired, post-Covid we didn't get a lot of practice in together," said Salem Township Fire Chief James Rachwal. "Now is the opportunity to come together, meet each other, practice our working together should we have a train derailment."

Derailments are rare - but at least three have happened in Metro Detroit in the past year.

Last September, a train wreck led to days clean-up and traffic delays in Warren. A derailment followed months later — in February— in Van Buren Township.

Then, there was another in Woodhaven last month. All three caused concern but ultimately, weren't threats to the public.

Last winter, in East Palestine, Ohio — less than 200 miles away, a derailment spilled hazardous chemicals, polluted the air, and impacted thousands of residents.

It just takes one crash to magnify the importance of Wednesday's practice.

"Let me give you a simple example - the neighbors here is Ford Motor Company Rawsonville Plant, 500 employees today," Rachwal said. "So if we had a train derailment, how would we get those 500 employees out? How would we safely move them? We've obviously got neighborhoods around here. So, those are all things we want to plan for and be well-versed in should an emergency occur."

This type of team-building not only strengthens communication among first responders, but also, with the train companies.

Norfolk Southern provides the safety train to emergency crews free of charge.

"We want to make sure they have the training and understanding," said Connor Speilmaker, Norfolk Southern. "But also, the relationship with us, so, they can effectively respond in a way that is immediate, is planned, and effective."

The Norfolk Southern train makes 12 to 15 stops a year — mainly along the east coast.

When first responder agencies can't participate in a walkthrough, the company visits fire departments for refresher courses.

LOCAL NEWS

Dearborn, Ann Arbor agree to rent each other's fire equipment on emergency basis



A Dearborn fire truck. (Michael Kuentz -- For MediaNews Group)

By **DAVE HERNDON** | dherndon@medianewsgroup.com | Press and Guide

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Dearborn and Ann Arbor have agreed to rent each other's ambulances and other emergency vehicles on an as-needed or emergency basis.

Both cities agreed to the deal in August.

"This would occur if Rescue 1-1 is out of service for an extended period of time or if we wanted to add a second transport unit during peak demand times such as night, home football games," The Ann Arbor Fire Department posted on Facebook. "We are deeply appreciative and grateful to Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud and Fire Chief Joseph Murray for their willingness to explore and partner on this."

Murray agreed that the contract is good for both cities.

"I can see potential during special events," he said. "The request originated from Ann Arbor."

He said that Dearborn decided it was a good deal because Ann Arbor is also a larger department that holds many special events like Dearborn does.

"This agreement is only as needed and only will be utilized when resources are available," Murray said.

The deal calls for a small rental fee, but is essentially an agreement that calls for the two cities to share equipment on an as-needed basis.



Dave Herndon | Multimedia Journalist

Dave Herndon is a multimedia journalist with MediaNews Group, covering the Dearborn area for The Press and Guide. He started with the company in 2009, and has worked at several of their publications, covering everything from high school sports to government, and just about everything in between. He's been a journalist since 2001, and also has worked in radio and television. In his spare time, he has authored comic books and works on various anthology books both fiction and non-fiction.

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