

Portage County EMS

Notes from Testimony to Wisconsin Legislative Council Study Committee on Volunteer Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician Shortages

Highlights

- Population 68,883 living in 752 sq. mi. with 60% of the population is located in the Stevens Point/Plover area in the center of the county
- Our system serves entire except one township that contracts on their own for an ambulance service outside of the county to respond in their township
- 4,396 requests for service in 2015
- 3 ALS ambulances provided by 2 paid full-time contracted services
 - 3 additional ambulances can go in service from re-assigned or call-in staff
- 119 volunteer first responders in 11 municipal services (2 industrial services – paid employees)
 - 100% of county is covered by first responders
 - Provide a mix of EMR and EMT level care
 - Credentialed through the responding ambulance service
 - First responder services do not hold their own service provider licenses
- Portage County taxes for EMS
 - Pays contracted ambulance services and county EMS office
 - EMS Coordinator/ EMS Specialist
 - First responder service “grants”
 - Disposable supplies, vehicles & equipment
 - Special event unit
 - First responder recruiting
 - The county contracts with a billing service & collects all revenue
- Single medical director for two contracted services, communication center and all first responders
- County EMS Oversight Board
 - Includes elected officials from the City of Stevens Point and Amherst Fire District (our contracted ambulance service providers)

Local leadership of first responder organizations

- Report to fire departments or directly to town board
- Covered by municipal or department insurance
- Do their own hiring and compensation of members
- Provided a base operational budget from the municipalities they cover
- Have a variety of leadership qualifications and experience

First Responder Service “Grant”

- Approx \$70,000 budgeted to provide additional support to first responder services
- Not meant to supplant base budgets from municipalities

- Awarded each year calculated on a base distribution for each service plus an amount for each call run by the service in the previous year
 - \$4,500 – 21,000
- Used by services as they choose but common expenditures include:
 - Member uniforms/ clothing
 - Equipment/ vehicle replacements
 - Recruitment efforts
 - Training (conferences, specialty courses)
 - Member stipends which include a variety of systems to pay for calls run, on-call time, training and meetings. Some use a point system or provide incentives for weekend and holiday coverage
- Requirements
 - Budget, roster, quarterly reports, CPR and public education, skills labs and ad hoc (narcan, protocol update, narcotic diversion)
 - Penalties are imposed for not providing documents/ reports in the form of deductions (\$200) from the grant award
- Grant expenses are reimbursed to the service unless the items are purchased through County

What is special about Portage Co EMS?

- “County-wide service” allows taxing above the levy limit - 66.0602(3)(e)6
- Annual skills labs for providers
 - Held at various locations around county throughout the year. Open to all providers – not limited to just attending the one held at their department.
 - High quality education & topics they do not get in their normal monthly internal trainings
 - Spend time with the medical director, ambulance service director(s) and county EMS staff
 - Get to know responders from other services – break down turf issues
- EMS Association
 - Own non-profit business organization
 - Standardization
 - Credentialing
 - Policies – RLS, narcotic diversion, concealed carry
 - Protocols
 - Efficiency
 - All service leaders and system partners together
 - Attendance part of grant requirements
 - Combined resources
 - Recruitment efforts – EDDM postcard, EMS week, “ride-alongs” with busier services
 - Special events
 - Mutual aid agreements, cross-credentialing and auto-dispatch

- Give services a chance to see the big picture and network with other leaders.
This helps with turf issues.

TAKE HOME ISSUES

- Weakness in group leaders
 - Popularity contest winners or don't say no
 - Too busy with FT jobs to do much more than day-to-day ops
 - Low rate of responses to emails & other communications
- Furthest out groups have lowest resources, population to draw from for volunteers and fewer calls to keep member interest
- Groups range from 4 - 34 members
- Relationships between services – intercepts, HEMS
- Support funding assistance program expansion to EMR
- Explore more robust retirement plan options