

Emergency Medical Service Meeting – System Administrators

Sept. 9, 2008 - Climbing Hill – Meeting #2

The second Iowa Emergency Medical System Administration meeting held at Climbing Hill focused on ideas of how to create a Woodbury Countywide Emergency Medical Service (EMS) benefiting individual departments and bringing a sense of community to EMS.

Currently, there is not a countywide EMS system in place in Woodbury County and no formal mission statement. Funding is not available for EMS, because no formal governing organization is in place. EMS needs to create an authority of its own and rely on an established entity like the Board of Supervisors to govern the organization. Currently, EMS is not mandatory in Iowa counties.

The Woodbury County EMS departments need more funding. The departments all hold various fundraisers in their communities, but other options for funding need to be instigated. Placing a tax on license plates or having citizens subscribe to EMS are two possibilities. City councils do not understand how important EMS is to their community. Anthon and as well as other emergency services departments have gone to their city council for funding; however, their efforts have been unsuccessful. In some communities, like Cushing, the council allocates money for the fire department, but not the ambulance/emergency service.

Membership in the emergency squads is another issue departments struggle with daily. For almost every department in Woodbury County, increasing the number of members is necessary, especially those responding to emergency calls. Smaller communities have experienced population decreases or the residents are commuting for work during the day, which leaves very few in town to answer calls. Area communities, as well as the state, must be mindful of this and action must be taken to address the problem. A possible solution would be reimbursement of community emergency personnel; although funding mechanism for this solution would be problematic.

Woodbury County does not employ a countywide medical director nor is there a countywide board of medical directors overseeing emergency care. Each emergency service has its own designated director. The costs to hire one director for the entire system would be more than departments can currently afford unless additional funding becomes available. The need for consistent medical direction, either through an active board or a single paid-professional, is a crucial for successful countywide emergency management.