

Emergency Medical Service Meeting – System Administrators

Oct. 15, 2008 - Climbing Hill – Meeting #3

The third Iowa Emergency Medical System Administration meeting held at Climbing Hill focused on how to improve staffing and training for Woodbury Countywide Emergency Medical Service (EMS) departments.

Currently, there is not a countywide EMS medical director for Woodbury County. Squads reported they have not had trouble keeping a medical director, but once the doctors retire there may be trouble finding one to take on the duties associated with an EMS medical director. However, according to current Iowa law a designee may be hired (such as a nurse, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner). The designee can be a liaison for the doctor, meaning he or she will complete the work that the doctor signs off on. This could reduce costs and get work done in a more timely manner.

The communication center does not have an on-site medical director, but dispatchers can sort calls by type (ie: ambulance call). Currently, dispatchers are trained and certified annually. One possibility to assist departments with staffing and training is to give the comm. Center a countywide roster. All calls would go to all EMS responders in Woodbury County. This would require countywide protocols, rosters and a board to govern the way the countywide system would run.

The major problem with EMS in Woodbury County is manpower. There is a lack of resources (people), because people work out of town and are not available during the day, and there is no monetary compensation for answering calls or being on call.

EMS departments to the west of County Road K-64 do not have a problem with manpower, but departments to the east of K-64 are struggling to find EMTs. Anthon lost three EMS responders in September. Currently they have six acting responders, but during the day most of them work out of town. Anthon's biggest need is from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Correctionville has four EMTs with one during the day. Oto has six active EMTs, but five work out of town. Danbury also has six active responders, but only one is in town from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Cushing is also in dire need of help.

A few ideas to improve the manpower situation, include dividing the county into mutual aid zones, placing an ambulance at a central location, such as Climbing Hill, during the daytime, or making city employees or school bus drivers become trained EMTs since they are in the towns during the day.

Another option is to pay EMS staff. Example of cities that pay EMS include Akron, Hawarden and Mapleton. In Akron, the staff is paid \$120 per call, which is divided by the number of people on the call. Hawarden hired a fulltime EMS director to answer calls and do paperwork. Mapleton pays \$25 per call plus \$1 an hour while on call. One problem with paying staff was mentioned that once people are paid, others might stop stepping up to volunteer, because "it's someone else's job."

Overall, the consensus was the number one problem with EMS is that no one owns EMS. There needs to be a board to govern the system and Iowa code needs to be changed to include money for EMS, just like fire. Currently, Iowa code mandates \$0.64 ½ / \$1,000 for fire. There needs to be legislations to provide money for EMS.