



DEPARTMENTAL PLAN OF ACTION

Issue: Emergency Medical Services

Date of Report: October 7, 2020

Department: Emergency Services

Director: Stephen Walker

SUMMARY:

In the past few months there has been a noticeable increase in incidents where Basic Life Support ambulances are unable to respond to calls for service as a result of decreased EMS staffing levels. We are at critically low staffing levels, placing our community at severe risk. COVID has played a large part in this shortage. Many of our responders are older experienced personnel that have retired from a related profession Many have chosen not to staff an ambulance and place themselves at risk during COVID 19. Additionally, which is a growing trend nationally, our younger responders must work and make a living, which means less personnel to respond during the normal workday hours.

Repeatedly, our 911 center dispatches ambulances to calls for service, only to receive no or delayed response. The dispatchers then move on to another rescue squad, and so on and so on. On many occasions, we are unable to find an ambulance to respond until we have made many attempts, sometimes more than 10. Recently we had a person in distress call in and ask for an ambulance, complaining of chest pains and attempts were made to dispatch an ambulance. The first ambulance did not respond, the second one did. The dispatcher stayed on the phone for 23 minutes before an ambulance arrived. While on the phone the caller went into cardiac arrest.

The average response time in St. Mary's County for an ambulance to respond to an incident is under 15 minutes (as identified by an EMSOP study a few years ago). Since January 1, 2020, 1292 ems calls for service took longer than 14 minutes to respond to a caller's request for help, some took over an hour. Charles County and Calvert are now regular responders into our county for EMS calls.

Based on extensive discussions with Mr. Stamey and Doctor Dan Geary, I offer the following options that could assist in improving our current public safety dilemma. Mr. Stamey has done extensive research on this topic and has contributed to my recommendations and conclusions.

Basic Life Support Current Status:

Currently we have seven Rescue Squads in the County. Each Rescue Squad has between 2 and 4 ambulances. Currently, the plan of response for our volunteers is for each Rescue Squad to have one Ambulance staffed with two Emergency Medical Technicians on duty, 24 hours a day. This means there should be 14 EMT's on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in St. Mary's County. Clearly, that has not been successful. However, as many EMS volunteers are diligently and faithfully serving our community, we only need to be concerned at this time with filling the gaps.

Mr. Stamey has personally contacted each and every Rescue Chief and asked if they need assistance. Each one has requested assistance with staffing; this plan is specifically based on their requests for assistance.

Basic Life Support:

Basic Life Support is Emergency Medical Service that responds to incidents that require immediate care but may not be critically life threatening. However, BLS is direct support for Advanced Life Support units. They transport critical care and noncritical patients.

DEPARTMENTAL PLAN OF ACTION:

The Department of Emergency Services will implement the following plan:

1. Purchase a used ambulance that is in serviceable condition. Outfit it, mark it as a Department of Emergency Services vehicle and park it at our building.

As supplemental duties, several my employees will drive this ambulance and provide care necessary. This will generally when other ambulances are not available in the county.

Contractual EMS providers will also use this ambulance when needed.

Additional coverage on weekend and or evenings, that will use this vehicle will be contractual EMT's as available.

- Funding for this vehicle and necessary medical equipment will be drawn from the OT 2020 account.
- Funding for staffing in this item number will be drawn from the Care Act Grant plan that addresses EMS services.

2. Contract with for and EMT's as described:

We will place EMT's into the seven rescue squads throughout the County. Rescue Squads Chiefs at the seven rescue squads are in concurrence and have expressed they need staffing assistance; The following is based on discussion with the Chiefs and their identified needs:

- Valley Lee Rescue Squad # 6
1 Ambulance – 2 EMT's
5 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 120 hours a week
Total \$4,263.60
- Leonardtown Rescue Squad #19
1 Ambulance – 2 EMT's
3 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 72 hours a week
Total \$2,558.16

- Mechanicsville Rescue Squad #29
1 Ambulance – 2 EMT's
5 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 120 hours a week
Total \$4,263.60
- Lexington Park Rescue Squad #38
1 Ambulance – 2 EMT's
5 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 120 hours a week
Total \$4,263.60
- Lexington Park Rescue Squad #39
1 Ambulance – 2 EMT's
5 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 120 hours a week
Total \$4,263.60
- Ridge Rescue Squad #49
1 Ambulance – 2 EMT's
4 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 96 hours a week
Total \$3,410.88 a week
- Seventh District Rescue Squad # 59
1 Ambulance – 2 E
4 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 96 hours a week
Total \$3410.88 a week
- Hollywood Rescue Squad #79
1 Ambulance – 2 medics
4 days a week 12 hours a day
Total of 96 hours a week
Total \$3,410.88 a week

Total weekly projected contract cost: \$29,845.20

3. We purchased two Paramedic chase vehicles with Cares Act Funding. These are fully outfitted and operational. We will use previously approved Cares Act Funding to contract two Paramedics that will assist with answering Advanced Life Support calls for service. Mr. Stamey currently runs these call as he is needed and available. These additional personnel will assist with this effort.

- St. Mary's County Department of Emergency Services
2 ALS Chase Vehicles – 4 medics
7 days a week 24-hour coverage
164 hours a week
\$8,829.76

ALS costs	\$8,829.76
BLS costs	<u>\$29,845.20</u>
Total cost of contract services per week	\$38,674.96

Cost of ambulance – fully equipped (excluding gas oil and maintenance)

This is a used ambulance that has approximately 50,000 miles on it.

one-time fee \$70,000.00

TIMELINE:

This initiative will be implemented as quickly as possible. Efforts are currently underway to provide relief to our community, ensuring quick and efficient EMS service.

STATUS/RECOMMENDATION:

This initiative is a collaborative effort between St. Mary’s County Government and our EMS First Responders to ensure the safety of our community.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

(Director/Department Head)

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County Administrator Use

CA/Director Meeting Held: _____

Plan Approved _____ Plan Not Approved _____ Plan Approved w/ Amendments _____

Follow –Up Requested: YES or NO TYPE: _____