

MEMO

To: Portage County Emergency Medical System Oversight Board

From: Portage County EMSOB- Technical Committee

Date: June 30, 2009

Ref: Final Report with Authorized Revisions from Portage County EMSO Board

On January 6th 2009 the following group of Portage County residents who also are EMS service providers met to launch discussion on what features a new 2010 EMS service provider contract should contain, apart from financial considerations. The technical team was created by Portage County's EMS Oversight Board. The goal of the Oversight Board and the parties to the contract, Portage County, City of Stevens Point, and Amherst Fire District, was to avoid a repeat of the previous round of contract talks that were very acrimonious, produced no new initiatives, and left the contracting parties and the public with a strong sense of unease about the future viability of the parties relationship.

Committee members include: Dr. William Meyer – Portage County resident, Member City of Stevens Point Police and Fire Commission, selected as chairperson by the committee. Additional committee members include; Dr. Michael Curtis - PCEMS medical director and E.D. Physician St. Michael's Hospital, John Zinda – City of Stevens Point Fire Chief, Tracey Kujawa – City of Stevens Point Assistant Fire Chief EMS, Tim Kluck – Village of Plover Fire Chief, Victor Voss – Amherst Fire District Fire Chief, David Allen – Amherst Fire District EMS coordinator, Sandra Curtis – Portage County Emergency Management Director, Michael Fraley – Portage County EMS coordinator, and Jeff Morris – Administrative Director City of Stevens Point Police and Fire Commission.

The committee first reviewed the status of the current contract and the process that was followed as the contract was amended over the years. Strong feeling was expressed by all committee members that the 2010 contract needs to re-focus community attention onto the delivery of quality Emergency Medical Services and patient transport. Examples of how we saw momentum gathering for this shifting focus occurring were provided in a Power Point presentation developed by Bill Meyer and Mike Curtis. Their presentation, built as questions posed regarding philosophical principles and values, helped direct the group's study focus. Presented below are the committee's recommendations. The recommendations consist of seven short and three long term goals for the PCEMS. Attached as an addendum to this report is the referenced Power Point presentation titled "The Next Contract Negotiation" authored by Dr. Mike Curtis and Dr. Bill Meyer. This report will be presented to the Portage County Emergency Medical Oversight Board during the Board's June 11th 2009 meeting.

Short term goals:

- 1) Proper staffing is a key to maintaining a well trained, focused emergency medical service; staffing the SPFD with cross-trained individuals (i.e. paramedic/firefighters) provides another very tangible benefit at no cost to the County.
 - a. The County EMS system currently benefits from the City service having the ability to staff a 3rd and 4th ambulance (and, on occasion, even a 5th ambulance) without additional charge to the system. The availability 24/7/365 of having cross-trained staff on-duty immediately able and qualified to respond to a dispatch need for a 3rd and even a 4th ALS ambulance is extremely significant for the safety of Portage

- b. Because of cross-training, the 3rd and 4th ambulances are staffed by taking on-duty Stevens Point fire fighting personnel from their fire suppression duties and sending them to the medical call in the County's reserve ambulances. The City has always covered this cost and is willing to continue to do so assuming that the County will fully fund the staffing needs for two 24/7 ALS ambulances (i.e. see item one above). Proper staffing is one if not **the** key to the successful operation of any emergency service. The ability to develop a goal oriented approach to the Portage County system with measurable outcomes is predicated on receiving the funding necessary to achieve and sustain proper staffing.
 - c. The cooperative spirit on which the Portage County EMS system depends to function properly has been enhanced in 2009 through the implementation of new automatic and mutual aid fire service agreements in the urban areas of Portage County. Note for example the new response and equipment sharing agreements between the Village of Plover and Whiting, the City of Stevens Point and Village of Plover, and the City of Stevens Point with the Town of Hull, Park Ridge, Whiting and Village of Plover. These agreements make it possible for Stevens Point to over commit its on-duty firefighting manpower resources to handle the EMS call load when a 3rd or 4th ambulance is needed, without additional costs. The reason being these other municipalities have voluntarily agreed to help Stevens Point meet its firefighting manpower and equipment needs when the need arises. It is important to note that Stevens Point also reciprocates with equipment and manpower for firefighting duties in these municipalities. The fire service is moving towards a concept of a regional approach to fire suppression and cost sharing. This is a direct benefit to the Portage County EMS system.
- 2) By July, 2010, Amherst Fire will upgrade the level of service provided by its ambulance personnel to the EMT-intermediate level. This is the first level of Advanced Life Support capability.
- a. The benefit of this upgrade for the residents of Portage County is a third fully staffed Advanced Life Support ambulance that will be on-line by July of 2010.
 - b. The cost of this upgrade to the system will be approximately \$35,000.
 - c. A 3rd ALS ambulance on line 24/7/365 in Portage County will reduce the number of runs assigned to the SPFD ambulances and some of the need for advanced life support intercepts with the Amherst ambulance and Iola ambulance from Waupaca. In addition, it should reduce the number of 3rd or 4th ambulance service requests directed to the SPFD.
- 3) The Amherst Fire Ambulance will be fully integrated into the County-wide call allocation plan and mutual aid network.
- 4) Portage County must provide the City of Stevens Point sufficient funding to cover the City's personnel costs to staff two ALS ambulances 24/7/365. Fourteen is the number of

- 5) There are measurable benefits to integrating the Amherst ALS ambulance into the County-wide dispatch plan.
 - a. There will be 3 ALS ambulances (2 from Stevens Point, 1 from Amherst) serving Portage County 24/7/365.
 - b. It will enlarge the service area assigned to Amherst which will provide improved response times to those service areas and lighten the call load of the Stevens Point ambulances. Therefore it will allow the system to focus on a concept that it should be providing the greatest good for all Portage County residents.
 - c. It operationalizes the cooperative nature the state and federal governments expect local service providers to practice.
 - d. It further lessens the occurrences where the SPFD has to rely on overtime to meet its firefighting duties to the citizens of Stevens Point and/or its EMS duties to the citizens of Portage County.
 - e. It enhances dispatch flexibility when multiple incidents are occurring.

- 6) Minimize/eliminate the impact of political boundaries on response zone design
 - a. Make sure EMS based Mutual Aid agreements are developed and signed by all government units to protect their individual liability risks and costs if any exist.
 - b. Research the need for any inter-government agreements that might be more effective than Mutual Agreements at protecting local liability while enhancing system flexibility.
 - c. Build deployment system by setting County wide standards for the following performance benchmarks.
 - i. Response time reliability
 - ii. Clinical excellence
 - iii. Customer satisfaction
 - iv. Fiscal stewardship
 - v. Operational safety
 - vi. Organizational culture of cooperation and mutual support
 - d. Locate properly staffed response vehicles in sites where they are most likely to improve response and service goals rather than maintain them within their political boundaries based on who the individuals are employed by. An example would be re-locating SPFD Medic 2 to Plover Fire Headquarters for all or part of the day early in 2010 once the new contract is signed. Based on current call load analysis this would be a critical step. Other moves that could be implemented following call load analysis would be locating an ambulance near Highway 10 and County Road "J"; temporary relocation of the staffed ambulances to fill gaps in coverage caused as units are deployed and/or are clearing their calls for service.

- 7) Improve the capability and redundancy of the current Portage County Dispatch centers to support the Portage County EMS system by studying joint dispatch versus co-located dispatch as well as development of an actual emergency back-up plan should operations be disabled.
 - a. Study ways to enhance cooperation between the PCSD and SPPD Dispatch Centers.
 - b. Staffing efficiencies may be possible.
 - c. Improve the quality of call taking and dispatching for all emergency calls.
 - d. Allow for specialization during peak call volume hours.
 - e. Study ways to improve operational safety and efficiency of the EMS system.

- 8) Consumer Education must become a staple product of the Portage County EMS system.
 - a. The relationship that is developed between the system and our users with regards to how to use, the system, when to call, when not to call is critical.
 - b. Education should take many facets including but not limited to - Public Service Announcements, media stories, public speaking engagements, use of the web, and other ideas that gain the greatest audience for the least effort and cost are desirable venues for creating a more aware and informed consumer of the Portage County EMS system.
 - c. Create a consumer satisfaction survey process that analyzes satisfaction with all parts of the system from call taking to billing for compliance with our six goals listed in #6 above.

Long Term Goals:

- 1) Establish Performance Objectives
 - a. System based not provider based.
 - b. Written and measurable based on our six quality standards presented in #6 above.
 - c. Make consequences real for not achieving performance plan - what happens.
 - d. Consolidate leadership of the program from the large committee to a smaller working group.

- 2) Consider a combined license/operating plan for the entire County.
 - a. Creates a unified sign of cooperation, acts as a trust builder, create a sense of shared risk for all if objectives not met.
 - b. Defines administrative duties for all parties and separate responsibilities.

- 3) Identify criteria for setting system size to correspond to current actual workload and then develop agreed upon formula for assessing realistic anticipated workload.
 - a. Allows for orderly planning both staffing and financial.
 - b. Minimize opinion-based decision making
 - c. Set performance benchmarks
 - d. Shape business decisions
 - e. Analyze the business of inter-facility transfers versus being a "911" EMS system
 - f. Create partnerships with area EMS providers how can we do the greatest good for the greatest number.

The committee unanimously supports all of the goals found in this report. Members also recommend that this committee continues to serve in an advisory capacity to the Oversight Board. Membership can certainly change but the work of this group is essential to having a stable efficient, effective emergency medical service/transport system in Portage County.