

Municipal EMS Survey

Portage County 2018

Compiled by Patty Dreier, Portage County Executive

Survey Completion

- 24 of 27 municipalities completed all or part of survey (89%)
 - No surveys completed for Village of Whiting, Village of Nelsonville, Town of Buena Vista
- Note: Partial completion or skipped questions is reason why responses don't always add up to 24 municipalities

Part 1: Transport Providers; Question 1a

How satisfied is your municipality with Portage County ambulance service?

- 14 very satisfied
- 5 somewhat satisfied
- 2 dissatisfied
- 3 very dissatisfied
- Comments
 - More county-to-county cooperation needed; satisfied though method of charging should be based on per capita—not equalized value (ambulance not a property protection service); inadequate response times—some have 30+ minute response; time study methods not well defined and doesn't account for railroad/weather; excellent service due to countywide expansion to Amherst FD; prompt; professional; quality; we are satisfied with SPFD's delivery of EMS; protocols support continuity and dependability; recent changes and additions to Plover FD are valuable step forward; high cost/person given state average; we couldn't get better services—sometimes arrives before first responders; good coverage; improvement can be made—especially for towns greater distance away from metro; positive customer comments

Question 2a

Is it a reasonable expectation to have an ambulance response time within 15 minutes from the time of call 90% of the time?

- 14 yes
- 7 no
- 1 not sure
- Comments
 - Arbitrary benchmark/standard; other factors should be considered; means nothing to outlying areas; what about 100% of time? what is too long?
 - Should look at partnerships; multiple factors and those unique to certain locations

Question 3a

How satisfied is your municipality that it is getting its money's worth for countywide EMS?

- 10 very satisfied
- 4 somewhat satisfied
- 3 neutral
- 3 somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 very dissatisfied
- Comments
 - Worth apportioned dollars; justified; quality; good value; paying for service not used; we're paying for fire suppression of another municipality; paying more for less; as long as cost is reasonable; need parity; closest get good service—merely need to help those greater distance away
 - Better methods using per capita, response time, number of runs?

Questions 4a, 4b

Do you support integration of private providers into our countywide EMS where they can help us improve response time?

- 15 yes
- 3 no
- 2 not sure
- Comments
 - Standards: private providers may/may not provide same standard of care; 2 paramedics vs. 1; all providers must meet license requirements; training; reciprocal agreements exist with private providers—then why not good enough for every day?
 - Response time: vital; we have responsibility; everyone's entitled; if they can reduce response time, why wouldn't we? reduces demand on other ambulances; little cost for big impact
 - System: currently very good—but deficiencies exist in some areas; adding other providers will strengthen whole system
 - Financial: private vendors “for profit” vs. local is more cost effective; various cost comparisons
 - Flexibility and collaboration needed
 - Differing perspectives on medical hubs and communities

Question 4c

If yes to integrating private providers, what expectations do you have?

- Comments
 - State laws and licensing requirements; consistent high standard of care; up-to-date medical protocols; 1 paramedic and better response times; training up-to-par; real-time communications; not practical to expect outside county providers to shift to our protocols; similar/at or above requirements/protocols as ours; ALS intercept agreements; prompt and adequate; better response time than we have now; reports on all calls/services required in timely manner to verify

Question 5

Other providers your municipality might reach out to if Portage County no longer had countywide ambulance service...

- Comments
 - Stevens Point Fire Department, Amherst Fire District, Wisconsin Rapids, Waushara County, United Ambulance, Iola, Wood County, Gold Cross, Wild Rose EMS, Joint Fire District, Waupaca County
 - Uncertain
 - Not interested—want countywide to continue
 - Would operate own system
 - Bid it out to any private services willing to come to our town

Question 6

What would your municipality need/want in transition from countywide EMS if that happened?

- Comments
 - Cost/assign levy; help with RFPs/contracts including standards/quality factors; reasonable timeline; equipment; don't want/would be huge loss

Part 2: First Responders; Questions 7a, 7b

How satisfied are you with Portage County's first responder system?

- 14 very satisfied
- 5 somewhat satisfied
- 2 neutral
- Comments
 - Exceptional service; good response time (some areas); dedicated; grateful; apprehensive about future (trends/declining numbers); City doesn't get any of \$85,000 first responder grants; first responders work out of area during day; quick; the best; knowledgeable; functions admirably; county could do more to assist with recruitment/retention

Question 8

Interested in maintaining the countywide first responder network outside the levy cap even if Portage County no long had countywide ambulance service?

- 18 yes
- 2 no
- 3 not sure
- Comments
 - Every minute critical/they show up first; valuable and viable; critical component to stabilize patient; deserves to be continued; don't receive funding but we still contribute through taxes; with poor response times—priceless; would certainly need them; don't believe complete reorg is needed—just tweaks to improve for long distance towns

Question 9

Suggestions about how we can recruit/retain emergency medical responders in your municipality?

- Comments
 - Awards; recognition; competitive pay with neighboring counties/units; tax credits/breaks for them; advertise/market the value; talk it up; training; ask EMS Association; collaborate with/incentivize employers and allow them to leave work; sponsor involvement; partner with municipality; consider what millennials need/want; be innovative; remove boundaries of EMS groups; what works elsewhere?

Question 10 (skipped here in summary)

Municipalities checked box if they wanted Portage County EMS to contact them about recruitment of first responders.

Part 3: General County-Wide EMS System;

Question 11

What elements/aspects of our countywide system are most important to your residents/municipality?

- Comments
 - Response time of ambulance and first responders; cost-equity; dispatch communications; whole system; great coverage; saving lives; patient-centered response; BLS at minimum; ALS paramedic response 24/7/365, consistent training; consistent equipment; good equipment; cooperation among responders

Question 12

What are barriers exist to receiving EMS service in your municipality?

- Comments
 - Not having 2 paramedics on every call; language; railroad; physical distances/geography; poor response so citizens compensate by having others transport them; egos; politics; weather/inclement weather; lack of first responders in some areas; procedures related to patient communication; when dispatcher seems to lack empathy; 911 calls routed to other dispatch centers before relay to Portage County; ambulance not nearby because it is at back-up location; contract disparities (essential for pay/benefits among providers to be equal); strict adherence to protocols of Portage County as condition to provide Portage County reimbursement

Question 13a

How satisfied is your municipality that countywide EMS concerns have been heard by Portage County?

- 5 very satisfied
- 6 somewhat satisfied
- 6 neutral
- 2 somewhat dissatisfied
- 3 very dissatisfied

Questions 13b

What issues does your municipality feel it has been heard on?

- 15 minutes is arbitrary and not national standard and causes people to think if call takes longer than 15, it is inferior
- None; right person hasn't died yet to trigger change; rural lives don't matter
- Any issue could be addressed with this survey, thanks
- Assume you mean "how responsive" —that is where dissatisfaction comes from
- 28+ year non-truth that everyone was getting ambulance service within 10 minutes
- Ambulance addition to Village of Plover
- Appreciate continued support to contract with Amherst FD
- Need to find way to compensate towns not utilizing county service
- That additional units strengthen whole system

Question 13c

- What issues does your municipality feel it has not been heard on?
 - All contract partners must be equal partners at the table in providing integrated EMS
 - State and national averages/expectations
 - Poor response times; values of lives; rural areas that pay highest rates get poorest service—fees should be reversed
 - PC EMS can save heart and stroke victims in 3-5 minutes response time—with rural response times, these victims have tough road to complete recovery
 - Having discussions regarding the City's concerns about EM and EMS
 - County Board already made up mind
 - Costs are getting out of control
 - It is early in process to know
 - Unaware of any concerns at this time; none
 - Response time data needs clearly defined methods (call type and patient outcomes compared against response time data)
 - Basic Life Support; requirements of paramedic drives up cost

Question 13d

Suggestions for improving municipality's representation related to countywide EMS?

- Comments
 - Negotiation and other oversight teams—make broader and include rural/more diverse voices; ensure equal representation; meet at later times; build trust that all will have input
 - Give back money paid
 - Education and communications—bi-annual survey; more open and frequent communications; more education across system/stakeholders
 - Adequate or satisfied with representation
 - Don't know

Question 13e

Suggestions to improve oversight of our countywide EMS?

- Comments
 - Assess long term needs/trends; explore community paramedic; less politics; review membership of negotiations team for balance ensuring no conflicts of interest; add non-field EMS health care providers to oversight committee; ensure expertise/best practices; transparency; more representation by all municipalities; streamline administration; continuous improvement; make provider site visits; listen; consistent EM office; stop letting Stevens Point run the system

Question 14

Does your municipality favor the general concept of retaining our current countywide EMS?

- 18 yes
- 1 no
- 3 not sure
- Comments:
 - Options are available to make it even better; should be restructured; urge retention; valuable outside levy cap; important having 2 paramedics; devil is in details to provide solution for each municipality; system broken/system not broken; more sound methodology needed; increased revenues to offset costs; need ambulance in Rosholt Fire District; be flexible and do what's needed to achieve standard of <15 minutes; focus on saving lives/customer; there is no hope/there is hope; no options are complete fix; need service *countywide*; provides consistencies/unified approach; best way for highest levels of highly trained professionals, well equipped and cost effective service; strongly support

Question 15

A few phrases/sentences about your municipality's vision of future of EMS in Portage County...

- Comments

- Quality: Consistent and rapid service despite who shows up; 2 paramedics responding to every call countywide as quickly as possible supplemented by trained first responders; customer driven; it's about saving lives; standards based; maintains current standards and operations
- Ambulances closer/more/repositioned
- Fair and open: equitable; flexible to achieve consistency across county
- Financially: controls costs; compensates rural municipalities that hire outside
- Structure: keeps countywide; breaks down silos; improves and compensates first responders; publicly bid—best price and service wins
- Chance to be a leader—do things differently; all possibilities are considered

Question 16

Anything else?

- Comments
 - Ethics problem with lack of parity; get Simulcast running; most is great; don't make it more complicated; capacities have been built over time—we have exceptional framework; directly pay outside providers; we are fortunate—allow others to explore alternatives; thanks for asking for input/giving us opportunity to communicate; benefits are significant; encourage efforts to nurture cohesive environment among stakeholders; continue support of Communications Center; keep up technology; address issues—cannot consider it in best interest of County to fracture; recognize need for greater good—for what's needed to maintain vitality; time to pull ourselves up another rung on ladder of success; preserve what works, fix what doesn't

Conclusion

- Scanned copies of each municipal EMS Survey can be found at <http://www.co.portage.wi.us/departments/sheriff-s-office/emergency-medical-services-division/portage-county-ems-survey>
- If additional survey materials are received, they will be uploaded though this summary won't be changed as of March 26, 2018
- For more info about Portage County Emergency EMS, 715-346-1399