

Crawford County



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Neil Fratus, City of Titusville

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EMS Commission

c/o Crawford County DPS

632 Pine Street

Meadville, Pennsylvania 16335

EMS Commission Members

Jason McPherson, Meadville Ambulance

Kurt Dennis, Greenwood Township

Maderia Paraskos, Conneaut Lake Amb

Austin Bates, Springboro Ambulance

Krista Geer, Active Aging

Megan Mason, Linesville Ambulance

Bill McClincy, EMMCO West

Jodi Greer, Centerville Ambulance

Josh Manuel, Crawford County DPS

Bill Taylor, Townville Ambulance

Tonya Moyer, Crawford County Care Ctr

Crawford County Emergency Medical Service Commission

Crawford County DPS and GoTo Webinar

MINUTES

June 30, 2022, 9:00am

- I. Commissioner's Welcome: Crawford County Commissioner Eric Henry welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for meeting in subcommittees since the last meeting.
- II. Roll Call of Attendees: A roll call of attendees was conducted with all Members in attendance except for Austin Bates who was excused due to being on a funeral detail. Commissioner Eric Henry and all of Crawford County DPS were in attendance.
- III. Altay Baskan Testimony: Altay works per-diem at Meadville Area Ambulance Service. He attended Allegheny College and worked at the Meadville Area Recreation Complex. One day, he saw fire trucks and ambulances going past his home and wanted to get involved in emergency services. He joined a fire department and decided to take the EMT course. He is now applying for the paramedic class. The National Registry wasn't too difficult to take, but the possible answers were all too close to being the correct answer. He was asked why he would not obtain a job in EMS? He said the pay is too low, the 24- or 48-hour shifts causing sleep deprivation, and a lot of the 9-1-1 calls they are dispatched to are not true medical emergencies requiring an ambulance to transport the patient. He was asked what was wrong with the EMS System? He said again 24- and 48-hour shifts and unnecessary interagency transports. He said only about two out of thirty 9-1-1 dispatched emergency calls require an ambulance. He was asked if has heard patients tell him, "I called my primary care physician and they said to call the ambulance." He said he has heard that a lot. He was asked how he liked the EMT Power Point educational method. He said the Power Point presentations are very dry but realized that the information needed to be presented that way but is still very hard to stay engaged in the course. He said in college the professor uses Power Point as a supplemental tool to learning. Some EMS instructors do teach students how to take standardized tests in their EMS classes. He was asked what the route cause for residents to call 9-1-1 instead of calling someone else? He replied that many residents feel helpless and they either don't have family or friends to call upon for help or they don't want to burden them.

Commissioner Henry mentioned that many patients do not have the support system to help them. Long Term Care Centers are limited to the number of patients they can take due to lack of staffing. We need to give residents the correct help that they need and that is not always an ambulance. Altay was asked if he would recommend the EMS profession to his friends. He said he would definitely recommend the EMS profession to his friends, but not as a career, only part time or on a volunteer basis. He was asked about the EMT course and National Registry Test. He said they would go over Power Point slides for a week and then have hands on training on the weekends. He took the National Registry Test right after completing the class. He had difficulty in finding a practical testing site that was close. The closest he found was in Pittsburgh. Commissioner Henry thanked Altay for his testimony and the Commissioners are contributing some of their ARPA funds towards Paramedic classes.

- IV. Special Guest, Dr. Aaron Rhone, PA DOH Bureau of EMS Director attended virtually. He apologized for not being able to attend in person. He gave updates on current legislation that was being considered in Harrisburg. House Bill 2097 allowing EMS staffing to change with EVOC driver effective until April 2027 is in committee. He did have the authority to extend the staffing change which he did last week. This was a great enhancement for the EMS system state wide and he was thanked for doing that. Senate Bill 861 is the EMS Compact Bill is on the Governor's desk to be signed into law. This would provide out of state EMS to be able to cross state lines to provide EMS. The EMS Bill to remove National Registry from EMS training is opposed by the Bureau. It would cost the Commonwealth 2 million dollars a year to maintain another test, most complaints have been reviewed and found not to be factual. Also, Senate Bill 861 mandates National Registry so this bill would conflict with the other bill. Director Rhone reported they are hiring 2 more employees in preparedness, 1 in education, and 1 manager in the near future.

Question and answers followed Director Rhone's comments. Are EMS Memberships standardized across the Commonwealth? Answer, the EMS act does not regulate EMS Memberships, that is an individual ambulance services action. Can Act 10 grants be used to pay for employee healthcare? Answer, no. Question, can ALS equipment be stored on a BLS ambulance for off duty paramedics to use? Answer, no due to storage and legal issues. The ALS service would need to be dispatched to the call. Question, there has been an increase in interfacility transports and now many patients need to go to a specialist by ambulance out of the area. Is there anything DOH can do to help educate the hospital system that these patients do not need an ambulance? Answer, there has been some conversations between DOH and the hospitals but further education is needed. Question, in regards to the legislation removing National Registry testing, it is the instruction of the students that need to be improved along with instructor enrichment training. Answer, this issue is Commonwealth wide and he is working on it and some instructors are not National Registry certified themselves. ETA's also need to help the instructors. When comparing National Registry of EMS and Nurses, the testing results are the same pass-fail ratio. Question, some students come to EMS courses without the basic reading, writing, and comprehension skills. ETA's report they cannot provide any additional training to the students other than what is in the MSA for the course. Answer, DOH cannot deny anyone EMS education if they sign-up for a course. It was reported one community college even provided a tutor and provided extra help after courses for students.

V. Report Out of Subcommittees

- a. **Communications:** The Subcommittee met and came up with their top objectives. He said all emergency medical services need to report to the 9-1-1 Center if they are in or out of service. They did some research into having a nurse available to the seven county Northern Tier Communication Group to be able to triage the medical calls. They need to investigate whether that nurse can call the doctors office for the patient to get them an appointment. Commissioner Henry said we need to help educate the patients and their family on who to call for various levels of need. He complimented the 9-1-1 Center for redirecting EMS units to higher or lower level of medical severity when multiple calls are received. Obvious DOA dispatches for an ambulance to respond will be discussed with the Crawford County Coroner.
- b. **Government:** The Subcommittee met and came up with their top objectives.
Funding: Municipalities need to provide funding to EMS agencies in their municipalities. By law they can add .5 mills to property taxes for EMS. EMS agencies need to give municipalities financial reports for the funds they receive.
Personnel: A short-term fix is to allow non-EMS personnel to continue to be a driver. Paying EMT's to staff BLS ambulances during the weekday at first would help the system. On obvious DOA calls, can the QRS or IRP be dispatched instead of BLS or ALS?
Education: It is difficult but the community needs to be educated on the seriousness of the state of EMS. Residents need to be educated on what medical problems warrant calling 9-1-1 for an ambulance and what conditions they can go by personal vehicle. Continue to work with and strengthen the social services agencies to help those residents that over use the EMS system unnecessarily and those with mental illnesses. BLS services need to be trained that they can take care of patients without always having ALS to assist them. Review the load and go philosophy compared to waiting on scene for ALS to arrive and what is being taught in EMT classes.
- c. **Volunteer Services:** The Subcommittee met and came up with their top objectives. They discussed the needed legislative changes needed, educate and encourage municipalities to adopt ½ mill for EMS, they were ok with removing the National Registry written test but wanted to keep the practical test. They were opposed to QRS billing the BLS or ALS for responding.
- d. **Paid Services:** They did not meet as a group but did have conversations over the past month. The number one issue is funding. ALS cannot survive on 9-1-1 dispatches only. Medicaid rates have been reduced by 6% over the last twenty years. Municipalities are responsible for providing EMS in their municipality but do not meet or fund the system. Number two is staffing which is proportionate to funding. You can work at any convenient gas station and make the same amount as someone performing life saving medical care. They are looking at ways to be more efficient. We need to fix ourselves. Unnecessary use of the EMS system in non-emergent 9-1-1 calls, interfacility transports, and out of town specialist transports. We need to have a unified voice. For over twenty-five years we have been trying to get the insurance check sent to the ambulance and not the patient. Director Rhone responded that the insurance industry has stronger lobbyist than EMS does.

- e. Stakeholders: The Subcommittee met and came up with their top objectives. They discussed a Community Care Network, patient transportation needs other than an ambulance, stretcher vans, billing MCO's, and mental health resources. There is a need for more volunteerism. They discussed health care prevention initiatives within the patient's home to make their home safer and adaptive to their needs. In some cases, CNA's are the personnel going into the homes to help residents with limited training and experience. There are also not enough CNA's employed for the number of residents needing assistance. Commissioner Henry reported that the Crawford County Care Center is now doing x-rays and lab testing in house so residents do not need to leave the facility.

VI. Legislation

- a. PA House Bill 2434 would increase the Medicaid payments. The EMS Commission was unanimous in directing Commissioner Henry to send a letter to the State Legislature in support of this legislation.
- b. PA Authority Bill would also be good legislation to help the EMS system.
- c. Municipal ½ Sales Tax. This is the only funding which is currently in legislation. The attachment has the breakdown of what each of the fifty-one municipalities could allocate to EMS at ½ mill. Municipalities can impose a 3 mill for fire protection. Commission Henry will draft a letter to the municipalities outlining this option.

VII. Action Items for Next Meeting: Commissioner Henry asked for each of the Subcommittees to meet again to work on those objectives they came up with. Discussion with the PA State Police on mental health transports and meeting with the Crawford County Coroner on ambulance dispatches to deaths will be included. He said in August, a Paramedic who has been working in the EMS profession for thirty years will come to testify to the EMS Commission. He thanked Director Rhone for attending and for all he is doing in Harrisburg for EMS. Don Bovard mentioned promoting telehealth options for residents to use rather than calling 9-1-1 for an ambulance.

VIII. Next Meeting, August 25 at 9:00am at Crawford County DPS

IX. Adjournment: The EMS Commission adjourned at 10:48am

Crawford County EMS Commission

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