

Calhoun County EMS System History

Since the days of the funeral homes, Calhoun County had 6 communities take over the provision of EMS in their areas as volunteers. Those were Farnhamville, Lake City, Lohrville, Pomeroy, Manson and Rockwell City. In the 80's an Ambulance Authority comprised of individuals from each of these communities and services was formed to provide the financial oversight of county funds that were given to this authority for local services. In 2006 the county provided a total of \$116, 816 for ambulance services which were divided among the six services based on a "formula" developed years prior by the Ambulance Authority.

Calhoun County received several system development grants since 2001 and hired a EMS System Coordinator, developed a more formal Advisory Council, disbanding the old Authority that had not met in years and started working on ways to assist the local volunteer services with the paperwork and other requirements that had become burdens for those services.

In 2006 two of the local services were having trouble providing coverage for their service areas due to retirements, relocation of EMT's, etc. Over the next year, a committee comprised of citizens, city council members, city ambulance members and the EMS Coordinator were held to determine the best course of action. The communities affected were unable to find local volunteers to train and replace those that they had lost. As an interim measure, the County EMS Coordinator provided staffing at these services when they could not cover themselves.

An option of having the next closest community provide EMS service was not approved by that city council due to increased expenses, needed additional crews on call so that they would have someone available if a call came in at same time, etc. So, the option of the County taking over all three services was brought up. The Calhoun County Board of Health was approached with this option and they agreed to be the governing body for EMS with the county Board of Supervisors being the financial body and ultimate voice. It was many long difficult meetings on working out how this would come about. In the end, the County started a full-time ALS service in the center of the county utilizing an existing city service, non-transport agreements were signed with the other 2 services. In order to make this happen, the county agreed to owning all equipment, vehicles, providing insurance on volunteers, paying for all expenses including lease of the 2 services buildings for 2 years. A formal agreement was developed and signed by all governing bodies for 3 years with automatic yearly renewal unless terminated with 180 day notice.

Calhoun County also provides ALS simultaneous dispatch to another community in the far SW corner. Lake City Ambulance, a hospital-based ASL service provides simultaneous ALS dispatch to the other volunteer service 8 miles away from them. Since that time, the Advisory Council has worked together to develop county-wide protocols with one medical director. The County provides training for services at no charge, provides billing options for 2 of the smaller services, provides avenue to purchase smaller quantities of supplies for the smaller services. The County also still provides funds to 3 of the services that did not need to join Calhoun County EMS. Through a yearly MOU agreement and with county

oversight these funds are distributed on a quarterly basis. Through this agreement the county maintains oversight of local requirements for the services.

I believe every community and situation is unique and there will be multiple options for developing systems in order to continue to provide EMS. This was an expensive option for the county to take, but the only option that was felt to work in our situation. Since its inception, we have generally been able to decrease the tax asking dollar amounts to within \$1,000 of what the county originally paid in 2006 when expenses are offset by revenues.