

County Wide Ambulance?

Property owners in Doniphan County are being asked their opinion on if a county wide ambulance service should be formed. You might be confused or even found yourself asking for more information. What's this all about? Don't we have emergency services? If I call 911 will I get help? What's this going to cost?

A few months ago, you might have read the article, "Highland EMS is dialing 911; your support is needed". It highlighted the immediate needs of the department to continue providing services. The article also noted a county wide service was being looked at because both Highland EMS and Troy EMS services won't be able to operate as is for much longer. Staffing challenges, increasing operating costs, and aging equipment are all concerns that will require increased funding.

Highland EMS covers the western half of Doniphan County. They operate jointly with Fire District #2, Highland-White Cloud. This means the fire department and ambulance service have to operate from the same funding. This is an extremely difficult task. Both emergency services are equally important and often work together on emergencies. Fire District #3 Denton-Bendena only has fire service with a few EMT first responders. This is why fire district #3 contracts ambulance service from fire district #2. Fire District # 2 is currently contracting with AMR for EMS services at a Basic Life Support (BLS) level which means they cannot administer Advanced Life Support (ALS).

District 1 EMS covers the eastern half of the county with the exception of Elwood. Elwood receives ambulance services from a Missouri based service. The Troy based ambulance system is slightly different than Highland because it is an actual taxing ambulance district separate from the fire district and is contracted with the City of Troy.

Now that you have a high-level overview of what the two ambulance services are let's talk about funding and staffing. Both services need trained staff and operating capital. In the past we were blessed to have a great deal of the staffing hours covered by volunteers. They were paid a lower wage and covered hundreds of on call hours. This method is becoming difficult to maintain due to a reduction in volunteers. 8,760 man-hours per year need to be covered and it takes several trained EMTs or Paramedics to accomplish this. Two or more fully staffed ambulances on call will likely be required to cover all of Doniphan County. This will require 8 to 12 full time EMS employees including the cost of full-time wages and benefits.

In 2021 a third-party consulting firm was hired to do a in depth study of the current EMS system. They also looked at future costs to operate a county wide service. Their recommendation was to create a county wide service that is centrally managed with full time staff. Benefits of doing this include standardization, stabilization of staffing, and an improved level of service. The study revealed a financial estimate of \$2 million dollars based on projected funding needs. The Doniphan county EMS committee is currently working on an RFP from 3rd party service providers and believes the cost could be lower between \$1-1.5 million.

We don't have to create a county wide EMS service but we absolutely should. It could be a life-or-death choice for you and the future of our community. Can you imagine a time when you have an emergency, you call 911, and the operator says, I'm sorry you're on your own? Perhaps your loved one pushes that life alert button and no one comes to help.

The Doniphan County Clerk's office has laid out what a \$1.5 million EMS system would cost the tax payer. The average per Ag acre cost would be \$3.94. The average residential house valued at \$75,000 would be \$4.88 per month. When we look at these numbers the tax burden doesn't look so bad. None of us want to pay more taxes but by doing so you're saying YES to saving a life. You're saying YES to the community and our way of life.

Doniphan County, let's step up and show our support for each other. Say YES to a County Wide EMS service. Speak up and speak out. Talk to your county commissioner. Attend the weekly commissioner's meetings and express your support.

911. Will you answer the call?

Thanks!

Doniphan County EMS Committee