

Providing Emergency Medical Services in Summit County Utah.



September 15, 2020

“The most dangerous phrase in the language is: We’ve always done it this way.”

-Rear Admiral Grace Hopper United States Navy

Introduction

In the early 1980s the Park City Fire District (PCFD) took on the responsibility of operating all emergency medical services in Summit County. Since that time there has been a lot of change in Summit County and we continue to see change. The changes we are seeing are having a heavy impact on the current way EMS is being provided in the eastside communities of Summit County. As community leaders we believe there are better ways to provide EMS to our citizens and we would like to explore these other options.

History of Current Issues

A few years ago, there were ambulances stationed in Henefer, Coalville, Wanship, Oakley and Kamas. They were staffed by volunteers who carried pagers and responded from home. This is the same way that the North and South Summit fire districts currently provide fire protection. There was rarely a time, if ever, that an ambulance could not be staffed. The volunteers were residents of the communities they served and that had huge advantages. They knew the area, they had decades of experience and it provided them a way to serve their communities. The ambulances were staffed with three crew members to provide better patient care and manpower. There were more ambulances and more responders.

Over the past few years there have been changes made to the way EMS operates that have decreased the capabilities and effectiveness of the ambulance service. Responders are no longer allowed to respond from home. They are required to work a minimum of 48 hours a month and they must be at the station during those hours. There have been several justifications made for these changes. One such justification is that have the responders at the Coalville and Kamas stations will decrease response times. That may be true for Coalville and Kamas, but this has increased response times for other areas of the county. These and other changes have made it so the majority of responders are unable to meet these requirements and currently there are only 3 local EMTs left that work for the EMS service. Henefer, Wanship and Oakley no longer have ambulances.

With the local responders all quitting due to these changes it has left no option other than to hire from outside the county. Normally there is no issue with this, and we welcome experience from outside the county, but it brings with it a new set of issues. Many of these new hires are just out of EMT training and have little, if any, experience in EMS. They also do not know the area which can cost precious time when responding. This has also drastically increased the employee turnover and new EMTs are needed on a constant basis. One other issue that we currently have

is sometimes one of the two remaining ambulances may only have 1 crew member. All of these issues are important and need to be discussed in more detail at a later time.

Proposed Solutions

1. Integrate county EMS services with the North Summit Fire District. We would then create an operational plan to ensure the eastside communities are provided a professional emergency medical service that will respond to all calls for service 365 days a year and 24 hours a day.
2. Implement a recruitment and hiring process to identify people with qualities that make competent, caring emergency responders with emphasis on community members.
3. Develop a training program to create qualified competent emergency responders and aid the career development and continuing education of responders.
4. Operate an in-house EMT training program.
5. Create an apprenticeship program for young adults who live in our community with a desire to build a career in emergency services.

It is important to note that the current dispatch system would be unchanged under this proposal.