

SUMMARY OF 9-17-09 SESSION WITH EMS and COPAKE FIRE

CLAUSSON-RAUGHT COMMUNITY RESCUE SQUAD

Established in 1946, 64 yrs. Old

Largest coverage area of any EMS in Columbia County: 167 square miles

Includes all or parts of Copake, Hillsdale, Ancram, Taghkanic, Gallatin, Claverack

Annual Call volume: 950-1000±100; 50% from Copake.

Operational 24 hrs per day, 7 days per week

Mission: Provide the highest level of pre-hospital care (advanced life support)

Funding: Towns, Contributions, Billing

Number of staff: 20-22 total, 12-paramedic, 10-EMT; Drivers are local people, sometimes fire dept. members

Pay-scale: such that staff has multiple jobs

Local absence of “other jobs” limits number of possible staff

State Certification: 120 hrs for 1 yr certificate for EMT

Associate degree, 2 yrs para-medic

Continuing education and recertification required

Incorporated in 1996. Then to present, 501 c-3

Sharon, Fairview and Hudson: primary hospitals

Mutual interaction with other EMSs works very well.

Current radio frequency arrangement does not allow communication among EMS, Fire and Police. (Each group carries all three radios.)

Areas of Concern for the Future

Cell Service Needs Improvement – dead/awkward areas; Ex. Calling hospital ahead would reduce number of ER stops

Funding: Billing/recovery ratio must be improved

911 calls do not pay expenses

Administrative cost for billing services is high. Can this be reduced?

Assisted senior living would help

Non-emergency transportation would help.

Insurance paid directly to callers does not reach EMS

Medicare/Medicaid payments do not reach EMS

FCC has mandated radio frequency changes by 2013: estimate \$30,000 cost

Create a “special ambulance” tax district (This eliminates direct payment by towns. Tax would go directly to EMS; \$60-80/person/year). Look at Kinderhook, Coxsackie and Colonie examples – in place now. Or Could continue billing at reduced rates so that tax would be reduced.

Funds needed for ambulances- equipment.

COPAKE FIRE COMPANY NO. 1

This company started in 1925. This year is 85th anniversary

Covers 33 square miles of Copake; rest covered by Hillsdale and Craryville.

Owns Building, bond issue

Developed their own Comprehensive Plan in 1992

This plan proved accurate in terms of recommendations on staffing, funding, equipment and training needs

Available staff: 35±5 people

On a regular 24/7 basis: 12±2

75% of their responses are compatible with 12 people; 25%, large structures, wildfires.

Because of compatible training, Fire and EMS can share people. Provides direct help and diminishes burnout.

In addition to fire response, No.1 also provides:

Fire suppression, auto extraction, low angle rope rescue, warm and cold water rescue, cardiac defibrillator response, environmental emergency assistance, response to hazardous conditions, fire prevention education, mutual aid to surrounding fire districts including Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Feels that mutual aid among fire districts is routine and well managed

Stable funding has allowed ownership of building and necessary training

Basic training requires 100 hours --- no specializations at this level

Areas of Concern for the Future

A major concern is staffing, more permanent staffing --- cost and NY State law involved

Diversification of equipment

Equipment standards, externally controlled --- makes some items very expensive

Cell tower problems – dead/awkward areas – cannot always call for help from the scene.

FCC requires change in radio frequencies by 2013; estimated cost \$50-60,000

Management of Resources

Ex. Need to link private lines to fire lines. Staff cannot communicate directly on “fire line” to let them know they are “on the way”

Current formal radio frequencies do not allow communication among fire, EMS and police (Each carries all three radios.)

10 years remain on bond to pay for building. Anticipate that “freed money” can be used for some expected needs.

Fire and Copake Planning Board interaction has been good. Concerns are and will continue to be:

road access to property; design, property and house maintenance in terms of fire prevention and suppression; should sprinkler systems be required, should fire alarms be required, --- note about 50% of houses are empty most of the time.

Better enforcement of code compliance: requires specific person because training involved, building exiting issues, citizen-business fire training issues involved
Consider tax relief for volunteer fire people
New York State Town and Municipal Law forbids aspects of “on-call” paid systems.
Consider understanding and publicizing this.
Hazardous Materials specialization is currently confined to the county level. Need to remember this if town growth would require more emphasis in this area.
Minimum training now is 100 hours. This does not cover specialty training. Expect this to increase.

AREAS OF COMMON CONCERN

Staffing, funding, training

Funding for personnel, equipment and special needs

Two jobs currently required, special tax districts, “on-call” paid system

Special equipment/medicines expensive because of critical safety factors.

Tax relief for volunteer people

Communication

FCC change in frequencies in 2013

Dead (static) spots prevent calling for help; communicating with hospital; each other

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