



La Crosse Fire Department

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Serving La Crosse and Southwestern Wisconsin Quality Emergency Services Since 1896

EMS in La Crosse: A Brief Discussion of Issues and Solutions

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The discussion about EMS in La Crosse is not about who is better to provide it. The public policy question posed to the Council and the County is, "Can the quality of emergency medical services be enhanced to the City of La Crosse while not adversely affecting the County?" I believe that the answer to this question is yes.

This public policy question is limited by the legal boundaries and political responsibilities of elected officials of the City and the County to their citizens and this fact cannot be ignored. Any attempt to frame this question by suggesting that enhancements made to any component of the emergency medical system cannot be made because of a perceived negative effect on another jurisdiction should not be a reason to deny enhancements to La Crosse. Thus La Crosse must look at options that enhance the quality and access to advanced life skills and transport services to our citizens; especially since approximately 60% of all emergency medical service calls in La Crosse County are in the City of La Crosse (Attachment 1). This paper will only discuss a few of the issues involved regarding this question.

What is wrong with the current system or why fix something that is not broken?

Continuous quality improvement strives to constantly improve current processes and systems; excellence is something that is always pursued but never achieved. The La Crosse Fire Department has been a provider of emergency medical services since approximately 1976. The purpose of La Crosse Fire Department's participation in the current role of EMS is critical and we seek to improve upon this role. At this point some history may be valuable concerning the La Crosse Fire Department's providing of emergency medical services. The department began providing emergency medical services as first responders in 1976; approximately 1996 the department upgraded the training of our personnel from first responders to emergency medical technician basic. We are again seeking to upgrade our training for some of our personnel to emergency medical technician paramedic. Providing advanced paramedic training will not result in the addition of more fire fighters for paramedic response as proposed.