Ambulance Service Board

Your Local Fire Departments

"Working on Your Behalf"

Large Participating Local Governments (2021-2023)
- Spokane Valley Fire Department
- Fire District #8
- Fire District #9
- Fire District #4

Small Participating Local Governments (2022-2023)
- Cheney Fire Department – Tom Jenkins – ASB Chair
- Airway Height Fire Department
- Fire District #3
- Fire District #10

(Five PLG voting members needed for a quorum)

Other Participating Local Governments
- Fire District #5, Fire District #11, Fire District #13

ASB Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2023, 1:30 P.M.

Present
Chris Wyrobek (Zoom), Dan Cecil (Zoom), Dan Williams, Don Malone, Daron Bement (Zoom), Frank Soto, Jr, Jim Walkowski, Mike Nokes, Mitch Metzger (Zoom) Tom Hatley, Tom Jenkins; Paul Priest (AMR), Jack Busch (AMR), Patty Ruggiero

Approval of Meeting Minutes
Motion to approve, Chief Malone
Second: Chief Hatley
October 11, 2023 ASB Meeting Minutes approved.

Agenda

New Business
AMR information regarding $2,700 transport rate

Chief Jenkins asked Paul Priest to share what he discussed with Chiefs Jenkins and Soto last week regarding AMR’s future $2,700 average patient transport rate.

Paul Priest explained they discussed in the meeting how the Chiefs would explain the rate increase to their Board so they could understand the process? Paul brought the Washington Fire Chief’s Summary that was put out when GEMT was going around. Some of the highlights that are associated with that document: This talks about Washington being a participant within the Federal Medicare system, which is statewide called Washington Apple Health (Medicaid). When it was drafted, there was a Senate bill that said the base rates provided for Apple Health transports are $150 for BLS and $168 for ALS. It said those rates are far below the actual cost to provide the transport by public and private providers. In 2007, the Federal GAO (Government Accountability Office) that provides fact-based nonpartisan information to Congress, estimated the nationwide average costs to be $415-1,215 per transport. The GAO also stated, ‘with increases in supplies, benefits, fuel, and operations, these costs are much higher today’.
In 2015, Washington State minimum wage was $9.47. Effective January 1, 2024, the minimum wage will be $16.28, which is a 72 percent increase in labor since the 2015 document was created. Idaho’s minimum wage is still $7.25.

In the medical field, we are faced with a marginal collection factor. When we look at new dollars added to rates and collection percentages associated; in the County it is about 8 percent on the dollar.

Medicare and Medicaid make up 70-80 percent of the payer mix. We could charge $10,000 for transport and that subset are not going to pay a dime more than they are today. Additionally, we are not allowed to collect any balance billed payment from them.

When we went through the last negotiations; we were way behind on wages compared to other large cities in Washington. We want to pay our people a good wage. The $2,700 average patient transport rate would need to become effective after the end of the current ASB/AMR contract at the end of June 2024; Year two and three carry additional 7% in labor increases each year, rates would need to adjust accordingly for the out years. He wanted to be up front and transparent with the increased rates to give everyone time to work through it.

Chief Soto asked why the AMR rates were ever included in the ASB/AMR contract? He said he has never seen rates written into a contract. Paul Priest advised that is by the choice of this body. Chief Nokes said he was told the reason this Board was put together was to ensure that the entities adhere to reasonable rates for the public. Chief Jenkins said it is his understanding that the county had rates to ensure parity with the City of Spokane and to ensure the County wasn’t subsidizing for the City of Spokane. Additionally, we are here to negotiate rates for our citizens. Chief Walkowski said we are here to ensure cost containment for the public.

**AMR 20 Officer Response Criteria and Purpose**

Chief Walkowski asked Jack Busch to explain the role of the AMR 20 Officers, how they deploy, why they deploy, so we all have the same understanding of their expectations. Jack explained that the goal of the 20 Officers is to make sure that everything is operating smoothly and efficiently. Part of that job is checking on crews at the hospitals and responding to incidents when they are requested by SREC for large incidents. They also want them to interact with the 20 Officers in each of the Districts, so when there is a major incident, they know who our supervisors are and know that they can come in and take over medical transport, supervisor or whatever is needed there. Whether they are dispatched by SREC or put themselves on the call, they are all supposed to check in with the Incident Commander, make their presence known and not get in the way, including if they are just dropping off a piece of equipment. If they are attached to the call as a resource, they check in with the IC for their assignment. They are deployed if SREC adds them to a call. They are automatically added on major incidents. If it is a general call, they answer calls from AMR crews, or disagreements with crews, or a customer service check to make crews are doing what they should be doing. He sat down with SREC last year and gave them all of their 20 Officer call signs as he wanted to make sure those are all in their CAD. CAD to CAD interface should be happening automatically. All AMR 20 Officers are Paramedics and are all 500 series. Mostly with the larger departments, they sometimes see issues between the crews on scene and the AMR 20 Officer deals with those issues while at the scene. They have one supervisor per shift.
Relationships (Ambulance Provider and Ambulance Service Board)

There was an involved discussion regarding some perceived negative relationships between AMR and those in the ASB. Chief Nokes said there are a lot of positives we can focus on in this group. Chief Jenkins advised his District calls AMR to thank them every couple of months.

Old Business
Sub-committee update regarding negotiation for the next contract with AMR

Chief Jenkins gave the update since Chief Malone was not at the last sub-committee meeting. They want to extend the contract for a year. They sent questions to Attorney Snure but have not yet heard back from him. Chief Jenkins commented that it would be nice if Chief Soto and the Valley Fire Department would reconsider staying with the ASB but he understands the Valley’s position from a business perspective.

Paul Priest said they add staff every year. Jack Busch advised they added fourteen full-time units in the last two years. They add units to keep up with the response times. They are operating at a one percent margin right now.

Roundtable
Cheney (Chief Tom Jenkins)
He has a meeting scheduled with some of his elected officials to let them know about AMR’s rate increase.

No one had anything else to add.

Adjournment
Motion to Adjourn: Chief Walkowski
Second: Chief Hatley
Adjourned at 2:30 PM.

Next Meeting:
Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 1330 hours, at the SVFD Admin Building