

Funding for rural EMS has always been a challenge. This is not a problem that's isolated to Oklahoma or Mangum. Several smaller volunteer based type ambulance services all over the country have had to close due to funding issues. Training and licensing requirements have increased and made it more difficult and more time consuming to become licensed as an emergency medical technician, therefore making it harder to find people who will volunteer as EMTs. Training hours for EMT basic have nearly doubled since I took my first EMT class in 1996. Paramedic training has also nearly doubled and requires two years of training beyond that of an EMT basic. Couple that with people's need to make full-time income and not having the time to volunteer anymore have led to Greer county EMS being in the current situation that we're in. Used to Greer County EMS operated under a paid volunteer type pay structure. EMTs and first responders were paid a flat rate to be on call for a shift and then if they ran any ambulance calls they were paid by the destination hospital where they transported a patient. About 5 to 7 years ago it became apparent that that type of pay structure was not going to suffice and keeping enough trained staff available for emergency calls as needed. That's when Greer county EMS started paying hourly wages to EMTs for coverage. This is a conversation that we probably should have had four or five years ago when the necessity to staff EMTs and pay them around the clock was first brought up. The other situation that emergency medical services systems face across the country is reduction in reimbursement rates by Medicare and other private insurance carriers I guess they believe that our costs do not go up with everybody else's. I have attached a spreadsheet showing what we have billed for each month starting in January and what we have collected each month for those runs. This is a running tabulation for the year and these numbers could change every day, as an example we may collect payment or partial payment next week for a run that was done in April or May as those collections come in they are applied to the month that the call was ran so that we can keep an accurate accounting of what we collect for each month. I've also included a column of what our payroll expenses are for each month and as you can tell by looking at these numbers that this is not going to be able to be sustained for long term.

We come to you asking for assistance in the form of a fee per utility meter so that we can develop a long-term operating plan that will help keep Greer County EMS viable well into the future so that we can provide emergency medical services for the people of Greer county. Several Cities within the State of Oklahoma collect this type of fee to help provide Emergency Medical Services to their communities. We will also be approaching the cities of Granite and Willow to assist in this matter since we also serve these other communities in Greer County. Part of our proposal we want to ask in this matter is that if this is approved by the city councils of Magnum, Granite, and Willow we will set up a membership type program for the citizens of these communities that pay into this fee with their utility bills. What this means is that if we have to transport a patient who is a residence that pays a utility bill in these communities if they happen to have private insurance or Medicare we will try to collect from their insurance as

normal but whatever is paid by their insurance will be accepted as payment in full and we would not bill the patient for any outstanding debt that insurance won't cover. With that we have to set up policy that would dictate what would qualify as a medical emergency so that we don't get into a situation where someone would abuse the ambulance service for Non-emergent needs.

It has been nearly a year since I was hired as the administrator for Greer county EMS I have made several changes hopefully for the better since I have been here. One of the first things that I decided to take on was to get a new medical director who was involved in EMS and would offer guidance and training for our staff. We have partnered with Dr. Bill Warden and his company Heartland Medical Direction as our new medical director. He and his staff are very involved in the agencies that they serve with training, protocol development, and active medical director involvement. Our EMTs have had to call Dr. Warden on a few occasions and every single time that they have needed assistance for guidance he has answered the phone and been available to give them direction as needed. Dr. Worden and his staff are what the state of Oklahoma has needed for a very long time in the emergency medical services system. We now have some of the most advanced protocols for EMS in the country. Our paramedics can perform the same life-saving procedures and use the same advanced medications as Air Evac and Survival Flight aircrews use. In fact Dr. Warden just received approval from the Oklahoma State department of health for his own protocols and we will be adopting them in the very near future. We have finally been able to get our operations while I'd like for them to be in regards to medical direction, protocols, and patient treatments. Now I need help with funding so that I can staff our system with highly trained dependable emergency medical technicians and paramedics.

What will the money be used for? Basically I need to raise our pay to be more competitive so that I can attract and retain good qualified employees and provide them with the benefits that they need to be able to live and take care of their families. One of the things that will be achieved with this is maintaining a backup staff each day. I have talked to our board and to our employees and would like to set up where we would pay two off duty EMTs a flat rate to be on call for 24 hours so that if the primary crew who is on duty has to transport a patient say to Oklahoma City or Lawton we would be able to call in the backup crew to cover while they are on that patient transportation trip. Other things that the revenue would be use for could include maintenance cost on ambulances, necessary medical equipment and supplies. Greer County EMS is a non for profit tax subsidized county based agency. Any excess funds are not paid to a privately owned company. Those funds would only be used for the improvement of Greer County EMS.

Getting patients to the definitive care that they need is the primary role of EMS. It doesn't matter if we transport them from the scene of an emergency or if we have to transport patients between hospitals that is our job. I have recently learned that EMS is not considered a critical

service in the state of Oklahoma when the covid pandemic struck the only extra funding that Greer county EMS was able to receive came from a grant that was applied for by the Oklahoma ambulance association and they disperse the funds based upon the number of ambulances in each service across the state. Greer county EMS received a check for just approximately \$19,000 from this grant in January. That has been the only assistance or extra revenue has been collected by us since the start of the pandemic. Other governmental agencies including local county and State have received numerous grants and other sources of funding many of which came from the federal government but none have been passed down to any county-based ambulance service that I am aware of in the state of Oklahoma. This is a big problem for many small towns across our country but if we work together here in Greer County I believe we may be able to solve this problem for us locally and be able to sustain our ambulance service long-term for the people of these communities and be ready to respond and help an emergency arises.

I have had meetings with the city manager from Hobart and she has explained to me how they collect and subsidize for ambulance coverage in their town. They collect \$5 per month per water meter in Hobart and Lone Wolf. This does not include any membership type benefits to the citizens. A few years ago they also voted in a 522 district for the lone wolf and Hobart school districts these two school districts collect roughly \$100,000 a year that is managed by the 522 board. They contract with Sinor EMS out of Clinton to provide coverage for lone Wolf and Hobart. We also are a 522 district comprised of the Magnum School district what this means is that anybody who lives within the school district, a millage of their property taxes that are paid every year are collected and distributed to Greer county EMS. We collect roughly \$50,000 per year and ad-velorem taxes from the 522 district. The only other revenue or income that Greer county EMS has is from collections for service. The last time that I spoke to the city council we had we had collected on a large portion of our 2020 calls because the contractor that had been hired did not file them in a timely fashion. They would wait and file them in batches every couple of months so it was impossible for me to get clear data on how much we were billing and collecting each month. In December of last year we quit doing business with that contractor and have hired our own billing clerk to do our billing for us. In doing so we have been able to file our claims in a timely fashion and build the data trends so that we can see exactly what our financial situation looks like. In January of this year we were able to make good on all of the back pay owed to employees and get caught up on all of our bills, we are still current to this day. We have come a long way in getting our finances straightened out but as I have analyzed our income and what we have to expend every month is becoming clear that we will not be able to continue without assistance.

Korey Thomas

Director, Greer County EMS

MONTH	CLAIMS BILLED	COLLECTED	MONTHLY PAYROLL WITH TAXES
January 2021	33,250.93	15,389.76	53,591.71
February 2021	27,716.02	12,141.03	19,141.28
March 2021	19,769.02	8311.02	19,372.24
April 2021	40,878.73	9316.39	27,073.59
May 2021	22,718.89	10197.47	26,191.02
June 2021	73,449.56	22248.67	25491.76
July 2021	36,469.68	10,070.13	26104.46
August 2021	11,993.22	3,069.03	24426.85