



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** ERICK W. ZINSER  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY/ CHIEF OF POLICE

**FROM:** ADAM ELSER, LIEUTENANT  
MARK THEISEN, CAPTAIN

**SUBJECT:** 2026 STATE FAIR AFTER-ACTION REPORT

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

Mayor and Council –

Please see the comprehensive after-action report from Public Safety summarizing and debriefing the 2026 Michigan State Fair.

- Victor

### SUMMARY

The Vibe Credit Union Showplace (VCUS), located at 46100 Grand River, Novi, Michigan, hosted the Michigan State Fair from September 3, 2026, through September 7, 2026 (Labor Day Weekend). The event opened on September 2, 2026, with the charity preview night from 4:00 pm to 9:30 pm. Attendance was limited to invited guests and groups identified by State Fair personnel as benefiting from the event, including individuals with special needs. The State Fair was open from 11:00 am until 8:00 pm on Thursday, September 3rd, and Friday, September 4th. It opened at 10:00 am and closed at 8:00 pm from September 5, 2026, through September 7, 2026.

### SAFETY RESPONSE

The Novi Police and Fire Departments had a comprehensive plan, response, and presence at the State Fair, that was based on 2025 attendance levels and plans. The State Fair had modeled most of its 2026 planning on the 2025 design. The Fair continued closing at 8:00 pm every night and strictly enforced rules requiring juveniles to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Perimeter fencing remained in place.

While the Fair was open to patrons, Wednesday through Monday, a unified police and fire command was established in the vacant MEEMIC insurance building at 46410 Grand River Avenue. Officers and VCUS officials utilized radio communication to monitor activity and communicate with the command post.

### THE COMMAND POST

The command post had enough space to support operations, including staff briefings, and provided a safe space for breaks for officers and firefighters, as well as safe restroom use. The post provided space for roving teams to briefly stop at, cool down, rehydrate, and refresh before going back on patrol. This air-conditioned space, with reliable, consistent power, cold water and drinks, and light snacks, was important. During the Fair operating hours, marked police cars, equipped with patrol rifles, go-bags, AEDs, and other equipment, were strategically positioned at the main ticketing, west ticketing, and northwest corner of the VCUS building. Additional rifles were positioned in the command post as well.

#### REQUEST FOR INTELLIGENCE:

A Request for Intelligence (RFI) was made to the Detroit and Southeast Michigan Information and Intelligence Center (DSEMIIC), and they did not discover any specific threats ahead of the State Fair. They deemed the threat level MEDIUM due to the 2024 shooting at the State Fair and the teen takeovers observed at different events around the country. They continued to monitor for any threats during the event, and none were detected.

#### OAKLAND COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (OAK EOC):

The Oakland County Emergency Operations Center (OAK EOC) was partially opened for the Arts, Beats and Eats festival and Michigan State Fair. Daily information was posted to the OAK EOC, and an Incident Action Plan (IAP) was uploaded to OAK EOC.

#### PATROLS:

Daily police foot patrols, police Polaris Gator patrols, and golf cart patrols were in place for the event. The State Fair provided the golf carts for public safety use.

Officers found many opportunities to interact with families and children at the event, especially during the daytime, when the crowds were primarily family-oriented. The crowd was very light on Thursday and Friday. Saturday seemed to have the greatest attendance with Sunday and Monday also being strong. Thursday and Friday showed very low attendance, mostly due to stormy weather. A tornado warning on Thursday forced patrons to be sheltered in Hall C for a period. By closing at 8:00 pm and mandating that juveniles be accompanied by a parent or guardian, juvenile mischief did not pose a significant issue this year. Officers were sent to multiple disturbances, but none of those resulted in a formal assault report being made.

Both the Novi and Oakland County Sheriff's Office sUAS were used to help monitor the crowd at the Fair and surrounding parking lots. It was also used to help locate missing people and monitor the area where any disturbances may have been reported.

#### DAILY BRIEFING OF POLICE OFFICERS:

Briefings occurred every morning at the command post with staff assigned to the State Fair. Briefings also took place with staff at around 2:00 pm every day when additional officers started their shifts. Maps depicting the various hazards were made available at each briefing. Officers were briefed on patrol car placement around the event and what equipment each had. Officers were also briefed on using radios and setting up a group chat to help relay information.

#### NOVI POLICE AND FIRE STAFFING AT EVENT:

##### Wednesday:

##### **Police:**

Four officers and one supervisor from 4:00 pm to 9:30 pm

One command post lieutenant 4:00 pm to 9:30 pm

##### **Fire:**

One Captain from 5:00 PM to 9:30 PM

Two-Part Time Firefighters 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Thursday:

**Police:**

Two officers from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Six officers from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

One supervisor from 2:00 am to 9:00 pm

One command post lieutenant from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

**Fire:**

One Captain from 9:30 am to 9:00 pm

Two Fire Protection Officers from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm

Two-Part Time Firefighters 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Friday:

**Police:**

Two officers from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Seven officers from 2:00 pm to 9:00 pm

One supervisor from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm

One command post lieutenant from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

Two OCSO deputies with three mounted units from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

One OCSO sUAS operator from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**Fire:**

One Captain from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

Two Fire Protection Officers from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm

Two-Part Time Firefighters 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Saturday:

**Police:**

Four officers and one supervisor from 7:00 am to 10:00 am for 5k run

Two officers from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Eight officers from 2:00 pm to 9:00 pm

One supervisor from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

One command post lieutenant 9:00 am to 9:00 pm

Two OCSO deputies with three mounted units from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Two OCSO sUAS operators from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**Fire:**

One Captain from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm

Two-Part Time Firefighters from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm

Sunday:

**Police:**

Two officers from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Eight officers from 2:00 pm to 9:00 pm

One supervisor from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

One command post lieutenant 9:00 am to 9:00 pm  
Two OCSO deputies with three mounted units from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Once OCSO sUAS operator from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**Fire:**

One Captain from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm  
Two-Part Time Firefighters from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm

Monday:

**Police:**

Two officers from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm  
Seven officers from 2:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
One supervisor from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm  
One command post lieutenant 9:00 am to 9:00 pm  
Two OCSO deputies with two mounted units from 3:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**Fire:**

One Captain from 9:30 am to 9 pm  
Two fire protection officers from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm  
Two-Part Time Firefighters from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

OAKLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (OCSO) STAFFING AT EVENT:

The OCSO was asked to assist on a mutual aid basis. They were able to provide two patrol deputies on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday at the Fair, as outlined above. The mounted units were very helpful in directing patrons to disperse once the event had closed. The OCSO was also able to assist at the event with their sUAS team. The deputies in the drone team do not provide traditional foot patrol, but rather, supplemental ariel support to the OCSO aviation team and Novi sUAS operators. They provided support on Friday through Monday evenings. Additionally, OCSO provided helicopter support by having Air One fly over the State Fair. Air One split time between Arts Beats and Eats, and the State Fair.

MICHIGAN STATE POLICE STAFFING AT EVENT:

Michigan State Police (MSP) were asked to assist on a mutual aid basis. They were unable to provide any staffing for the State Fair this year due to overall low staffing and many other demands made on them throughout the region and state.

5K RUN EVENT AND STAFFING:

The 5K Run this year was on Saturday morning. There were four officers and one supervisor working overtime for the detail. They all started at 7:00 am and ended at 10:00 am. For future 5K races, assuming the same course is used, it is recommended to keep the same staffing plan. Captain Theisen and two part-time on-duty members staffed this event.

TARGET HARDENING:

The VCUS has been encouraged for multiple years to place physical, vehicle-resistant barriers around the facility to prevent accidental or intentional driving of motor vehicles into the fair areas or unauthorized pedestrian entry. The Novi Police Department provided

sixteen Archer Barricades for the duration of the State Fair, which were positioned north of the west ticketing area.

The State Fair decided not to allow weapons to be carried by patrons on the property unless they were vetted by Novi police personnel as off duty law enforcement officers. This policy has been in place during the past years of the Fair. Metal detectors were utilized by the State Fair for patrons entering the event to enforce this rule. Security teams also used handheld wands to check people who were flagged by the metal detectors. These measures appeared to be much more effective than in previous years.

Perimeter fencing consisted of six-foot-high connected fencing that was positioned around the midway. The fencing connected to the southwest portion of the VCUS building and continued around to the northwest corner of the midway. Security monitored the northwest corner while the Fair was open to the public. From the northwest corner, security could ensure that no one entered the midway from the north. I-96, some retention ponds, swamp areas, and carnival ride trucks provided a barrier for the northern border of the Fair. There was enhanced monitoring of the entire perimeter by security.

#### TRAFFIC ISSUES:

Traffic backups became a concern when the Fair closed on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday night. Officers working at the Fair directed traffic exiting the western parking lots by blocking the right lane on Grand River Avenue and forcing all exiting traffic to turn westbound. The Road Commission of Oakland County was contacted on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday night to adjust the traffic signal timing to allow maximum traffic to flow away from the VCUS. This allowed the traffic backups to clear up relatively quickly.

#### MISSING CHILDREN

A reunification area for missing children was established at the State Fair Office. This area served as a central location where missing people could be reunited with those looking for them.

In addition to radio communication, a group text was established with most, if not all, of the law enforcement staff working during the event. The group text allowed descriptions and photographs to be shared so everyone involved had accurate information at their fingertips. This was particularly useful because the loud environment often made it difficult to listen to lengthy radio transmissions. VCUS staff were also included in the group text as they were sometimes the people in contact with the people making the missing report.

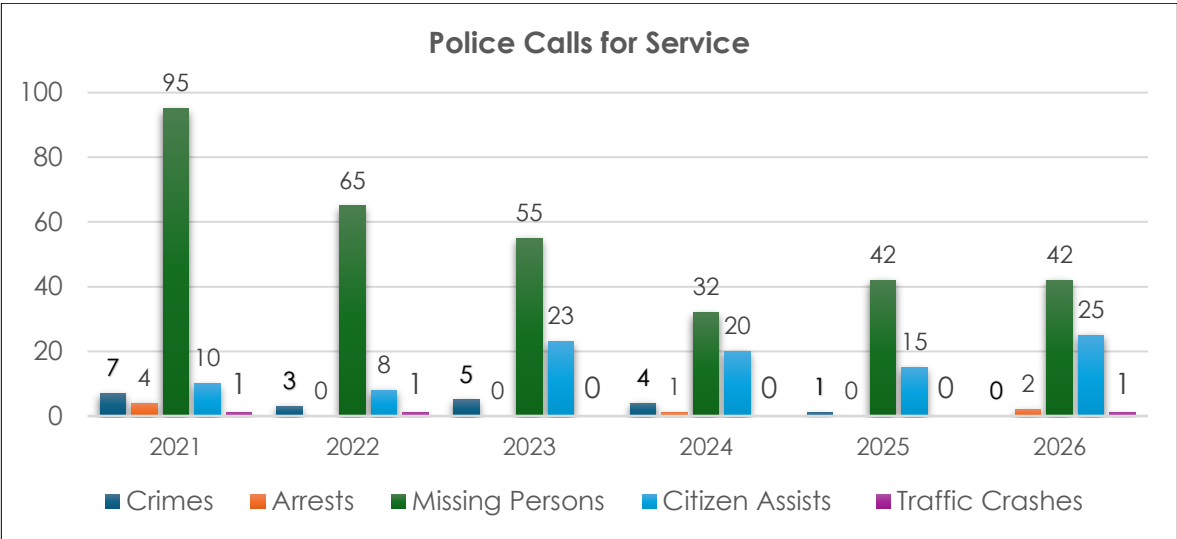
A running tally of missing person reports was kept at the command post. The numbers of missing person reports taken each night were as follows:

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| Wednesday: | two missing      |
| Thursday:  | two missing      |
| Friday:    | zero missing     |
| Saturday:  | ten missing      |
| Sunday:    | fourteen missing |
| Monday:    | fourteen missing |

The total number of people reported missing at the 2026 State Fair was 42. In 2025 that number was also 42, while it was 32 in 2024, and 55 in 2023. The days that saw the greatest attendance also saw the highest number of reported missing people as expected.

POLICE CALLS FOR SERVICE:

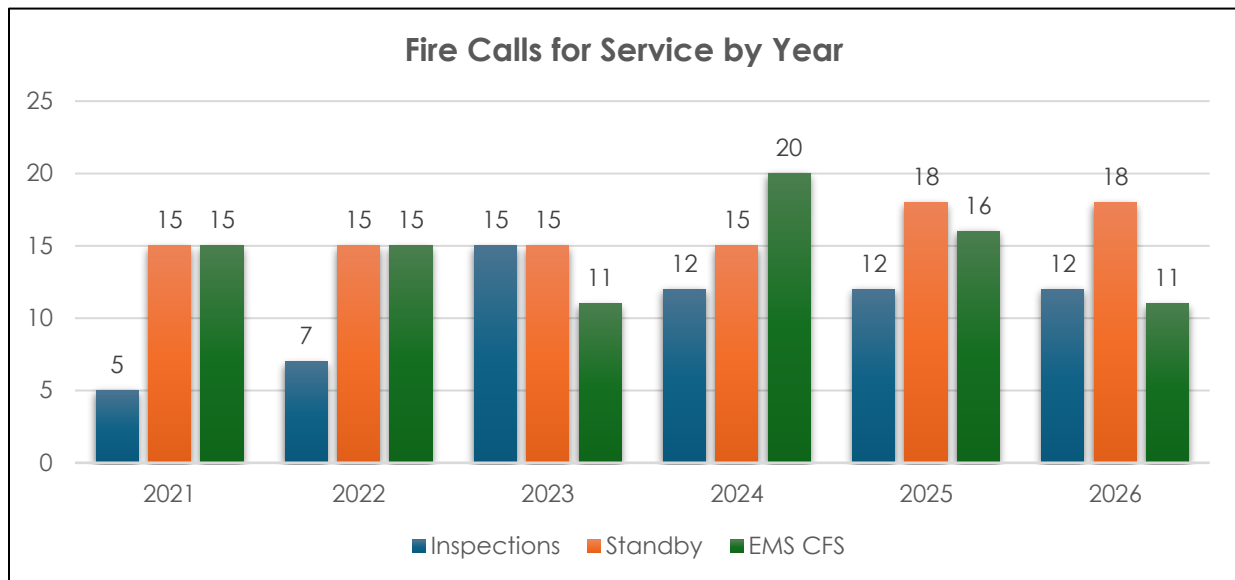
The year-to-year trends with calls for service delineated as crimes, arrests, missing people, assists, and crashes are as follows:



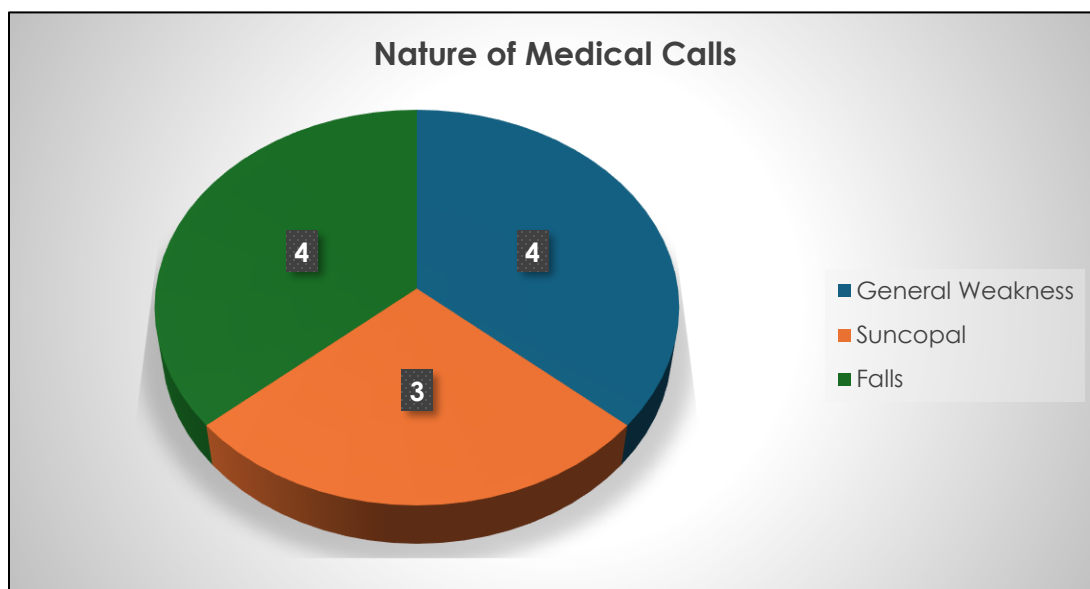
2021 was a record year for attendance, which has not been matched since. That high attendance generated a higher-than-normal call volume. The trend line for the other years is more consistent. In addition to the 42 missing person calls, detail officers responded to 25 assist-citizen reports. These reports included numerous situations like found property, lockouts, and requests for police presence for disturbances. Two arrests for trespassing were made this year while no crime reports were made.

FIRE RESPONSE AND CALLS FOR SERVICE

The Novi Fire Department had twelve inspections this year, and eighteen standbys. They had a total of eleven medical calls for service. The graph below shows the year-to-year data trends:



The Fire Department responded to four general weakness complaints, three syncopal episodes, and three falls outlined in the chart below. MEDSTAR transported two patients to Henry Ford Providence Hospital Novi Campus.



#### PROTESTORS:

This year there were no protesters. For future State Fairs, the current procedure of using VCUS staff to issue trespass warnings is sufficient. MIOC/DSEMIIC was contacted with various concerns about protest activity, where they monitored their sources for any indication that this activity may be occurring. They had no indication that any protest would occur during the State Fair. Any protests occurring outside of VCUS property should be handled like any other protest that occurs within the city.

#### sUAS (DRONE) OPERATIONS TO ASSIST COMMAND POST:

A sUAS was deployed through most of the evening hours to help assess the traffic situation, both in the parking lots and along Grand River, Beck Road, and I-96. The sUAS also conducted regular mission flights over the roof of the VCUS and Hyatt Hotel to ensure that no one who did not belong was there and could pose a hazard to the event attendees or themselves. The sUAS primarily monitored the crowd and worked to locate missing people or monitor situations that were being handled by public safety officials.

#### MEDICAL RESPONSE PLAN:

For the 2026 State Fair, the VCUS contracted STAR EMS to have staff on site. The two EMT's staffed the fire aid station near the State Fair Office. All patient transports were completed by MedStar EMS.

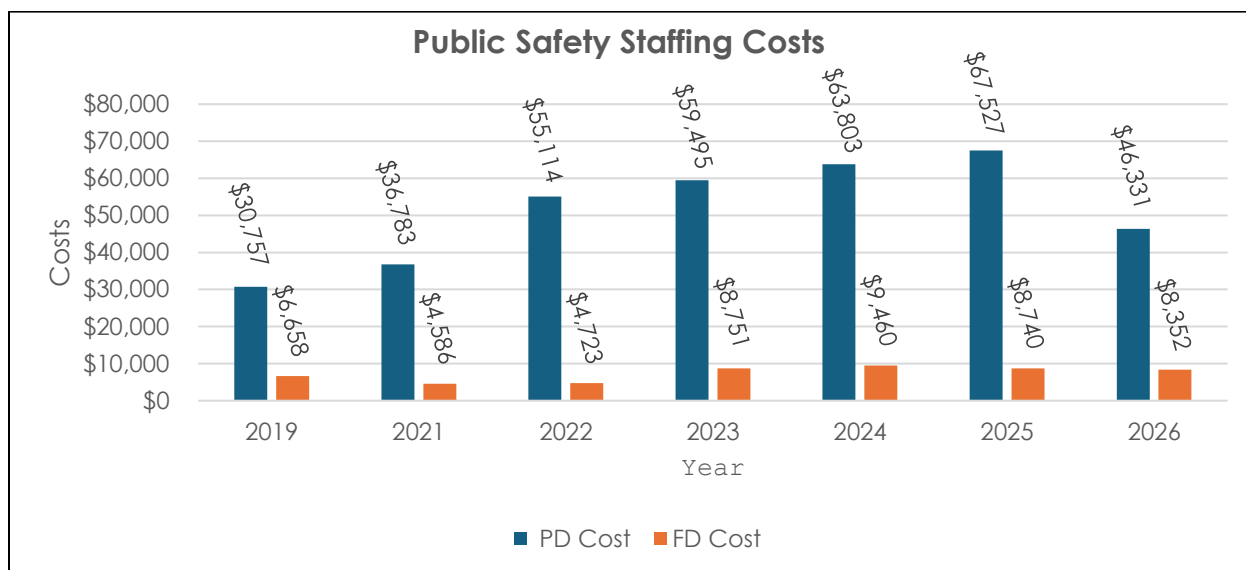
#### NOVI FIRE PRE-INSPECTION:

Captain Theisen and Fire Marshal Copeland conducted the pre-inspections during the State Fair setup and the final inspection prior to the preview event. Captain Theisen conducted the daily pre-inspections prior to opening the fair each day. Throughout the fair, each team member was on the lookout for any fire violations or fire lane access issues. If one was found, they made sure it was corrected immediately. No major violations were found.

#### TOTAL COST FOR POLICE AND FIRE:

The Novi Police Department and Novi Fire Department made a significant investment in public safety for the State Fair. The staffing plan for 2026 was reduced from the 2025 State Fair model.

The police and fire department provided 653 hours of public safety coverage at the State Fair (450 hours for the police department and 203 hours for the fire department). The City of Novi covered all the pay, benefits and equipment, for a total contribution of \$46,313 (fire not included). The police overtime budget was expected to be less than \$45,000, but a sergeant filled three officer positions and a lieutenant filled once, increasing the total personnel costs by \$1,575. This effort was augmented by the Oakland County Sheriff's Office who contributed 48 hours of patrol coverage, 60 hours of mounted unit time, and 24 hours of sUAS operators. \$425 was spent on supplying the Polaris Gators with fuel and providing snacks and beverages for the staff working at the event. The graph below shows the year-to-year personnel costs of staffing the State Fair. Officials from the State Fair have pledged \$15,000 to assist with the costs of assisting with the event.



#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The vacant MEEMIC building proved to be a great location for the command post. It, however, was an older vacant building that did give the appearance of being dirty and rundown in some areas. It provided a temperature-controlled space with electricity and plumbing. It is expected that the building will be demolished before the 2027 State Fair, so an alternate command post will need to be identified.

The consistent presence of a fire captain and police lieutenant throughout the Fair allowed for unity of command. This command-post staffing should remain the practice moving forward.

Police staffing proved adequate to the demands of the State Fair this year. The enhanced safety precautions taken by the State Fair have resulted in relatively little violence reported in the past two years. There were many instances of juveniles being denied entry and remaining around the property and trying to probe the perimeter for an entry point. Fair staff met all requests for assistance, but at times officers were task-saturated and stretched thin. With the Fair closing at 8:00 pm every night, three to four officers were regularly used for traffic direction to assist the large number of vehicles leaving at the same time. One of the officers working at the State Fair should continue to be a dedicated sUAS pilot.

Mutual aid requests should continue to be made with OCSO and MSP. The presence of the OSCO deputies and the mounted units greatly assisted with prompting patrons to leave the Fair ground once the event closed.

It is recommended that a dedicated transport ambulance be on site for the entire State Fair. This would provide additional staffing and the ability for Advanced Life Support treatment if needed. Having an ambulance on site would have reduced the delay that MEDSTAR Ambulance could have when responding to the VCUS and having to direct and redirect them into different entrances. The ambulance crew can also operate a first aid station. In addition, the ambulance on site would allow for advanced life support to be on site.