
TO: Kate Thunstrom- City Administrator
FROM: Dave Schmidt- Fire Chief
SUBJECT: Medical Response
DATE: April 28, 2025

OVERVIEW:

The fire department plays a vital role in delivering emergency medical services (EMS) as part of its broader public safety mission. Firefighters are cross-trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) or paramedics, enabling them to provide immediate, lifesaving care across a wide range of medical emergencies.

A key reason for fire department involvement is the increasing and often unpredictable response times of ambulance services, which are impacted by rising call volumes and staffing challenges. Fire stations are strategically located throughout the community, allowing fire personnel to respond quickly—often arriving before ambulances—to begin critical care and stabilize patients.

Additionally, utilizing the fire department for medical responses allows law enforcement officers to remain available for police-specific emergencies, such as criminal activity, traffic incidents, or public safety threats. This strategic division of labor strengthens the overall efficiency and effectiveness of emergency response across the city.

Importantly, the fire department represents the most highly trained and cost-effective labor force available to respond to medical calls. With advanced medical training, broad emergency response capabilities, and continuous availability, firefighters provide exceptional value to the community while minimizing costs compared to other emergency services.

Furthermore, community perception and expectation play a significant role in shaping the city's emergency response strategy. When residents call 911—regardless of the severity of the emergency—they expect a timely and professional response. The fire department consistently meets this expectation by ensuring trained personnel arrive quickly to provide reassurance, evaluate the situation, and initiate care as needed. This presence helps maintain public trust and confidence in the city's emergency services.

By working in close coordination with EMS and law enforcement, the fire department enhances patient care, reduces response times, and supports a balanced, responsive, and sustainable public safety system.

Below are the call types the fire department responds to on a day to day basis.

Medical – An injury or illness requiring an ambulance

Med Alarm – An alarm from an alarm company reporting a potential medical situation

Med Bleed – Severe bleed, medical involving an amputated limb, uncontrolled bleeding, gunshot, knife/stabbing injury, etc.

Breathing Diff – Difficulty breathing, medical involving poor respirations, shortness of breath, trouble talking

Breathing NOT – NOT breathing, Medical involving cardiac arrest, respiratory arrest, code blue, CPR started

Med Drown – Drowning, medical involving a reported drowning in a bathtub, pool, large body of water/river

Med Fall – Significant fall, medical involving significant fall from a roof, down a flight of steps.

Med Heart – Heart, medical involving possible heart attack symptoms such as chest pains, heartburn, vomiting, nausea, abnormal heart beat, shortness of breath, numbness or pain in shoulders or arms especially the left, possible stroke

Med Priority – Priority medical, a crushing injury, shooting, knife wound, severe allergic reaction, anything else you believe to be life threatening that doesn't fit in the other high priority medicals.

Med Uncon – Medical unconscious, Medicals where patient is reported to be unconscious, in and out of consciousness, or conscious but unresponsive.

Med OB- Any pregnancy related emergency including child birth.

Med Choking- Airway obstruction emergencies related to ingestion

Med Assault- Injuries resulting from an assault requiring medical treatment

Med Stroke- Suspected Stroke/TIA/CVA

Med Allergic – Allergy related medical calls

Med ILL- Medicals related to infectious or potentially infectious disease (COVID/Flu/Fever/Sepsis)

Shoot/Stab- Calls for injuries resulting from firearms or edged weapons

Suicide Attempt in Progress- Calls resulting from intentional acts of self-harm

Med Abdominal Pain- Medical calls where the primary complaint is related to abdominal pain

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED:

Discussion

BUDGET IMPLICATION:

None