



**TWO
RIVERS**
WISCONSIN

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Lift Assist Ordinance Informational Brief & FAQ

Overview of the Issue

The Two Rivers Fire Department is experiencing a growing operational and financial concern related to the increasing number of non-emergent lift assist calls originating from skilled care and assisted living facilities.

Skilled care facilities are licensed and staffed to meet the routine care needs of their residents, including safe patient handling. However, the Fire Department is increasingly being utilized for non-emergency lift assist services that fall within the expected responsibilities of these facilities.

Call Data Highlights

- Approximately 20% of all EMS calls are fall-related
- January 2025 – March 17, 2026: 79 incidents were for lift assist calls at care facilities
- 2026 data indicate this trend is continuing

These non-emergent calls require personnel, apparatus, and time that could otherwise be dedicated to critical emergencies, impacting system readiness and shifting costs to taxpayers.

Proposed Policy

It is recommended that the city adopt an ordinance (3-1-15) authorizing the Fire Department to bill skilled care facilities directly for non-emergency lift assists and similar service calls where no transport is required.

Key Definitions

Third-Party ALS Assist

A non-emergency response where Fire Department personnel provide assistance within ALS capabilities to a patient under the care of a licensed facility, without transport.

- Occurs in nursing homes, assisted living, CBRFs, etc.
- Facility staff retain responsibility for patient care
- Includes lift assists, repositioning, and condition checks
- Billed to the facility





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Patient Assessment / Assist

A response involving medical evaluation and care where transport is not required or is refused.

- Occurs in private residences or public locations
- Includes vitals, medical assessment, and treatment
- Billed to the patient or their insurance

Benefits of the Proposed Ordinance

- Encourages proper staffing and resource allocation within care facilities
- Reduces unnecessary strain on emergency services
- Improve availability for high-priority incidents
- Establishes a fair and consistent cost recovery mechanism
- Aligns with practices adopted by other municipalities

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Will this policy limit emergency response to care facilities?

A: No. The Fire Department will continue to respond to all emergency calls. This policy applies only to non-emergent situations where no transport or urgent care is required.

Q: Why should facilities be billed instead of taxpayers covering the cost?

A: These services fall within the routine care responsibilities of licensed facilities. Billing ensures that public funds are used appropriately and not subsidizing private operational needs.

Q: How are non-emergency calls determined?

A: Calls are categorized based on established criteria, including patient condition, location, and whether emergency medical intervention or transport is required.

Q: Will this create a financial burden on facilities?

A: The policy encourages facilities to maintain appropriate staffing and equipment to handle routine care needs internally, reducing the need for repeated calls.

Q: Is this approach used elsewhere?

A: Yes. Many departments have implemented similar billing practices to manage increasing demand and ensure sustainable emergency response operations.

Conclusion

This proposal is not intended to restrict service, but to ensure that emergency resources are used appropriately and remain available for true emergencies. Establishing a billing ordinance for non-emergent lift assists promotes fairness, accountability, and long-term sustainability of public safety services.

