

4/12/2023

Following the Morrow County Board of Commissioner's decision on April 5, 2023 to re-write the Morrow County Ambulance Service Area Plan, the Morrow County Health District has prepared an explanation of the reasons Morrow County should remain one ambulance service area.

1. From the time ambulance service areas came into effect, Morrow County has been one ASA because this provides the best coverage and service for Morrow County:
 - a. This model has allowed MCHD to maximize resources across the county by stationing ambulances in Boardman, Irrigon, Heppner, and Lone (7 total) which cross-cover based on need. MCHD employs over 60 EMS personnel who can cover at any location in Morrow County.
 - b. MCHD has two ambulances in Boardman and two ambulances in Irrigon. These ambulances and their personnel routinely cross-cover the north end of the county. In times of high need, such as inclement weather, all four ambulances operate as a team to cover the area with MCHD EMS personnel responding as Quick Response Teams ahead of the ambulances. Fracturing this system is bad for the north end of the county.
 - c. BFRD has not publicly presented a proposal that would result in better staffing or coverage of Boardman or the north end of the county.
2. There is concern about BFRD providing this service to Boardman because:
 - a. BFRD has not publicly shared a viable financial plan, which is required by MC-C-4-98, *"Each ambulance service provider applicant will be required to: (...) show that the call volume will be sufficient to provide financial soundness for operation of the ambulance service through community use of a paid service"*.
 - b. The Morrow County EMS Advisory committee has received a number of complaints related to quality of care and behavior of BFRD personnel. MC-C-4-98 requires an ambulance service provider application to, *"show its service will assure quality care to all persons residing in or passing through the service area"*.
 - c. BFRD has not publicly provided a staffing plan showing that EMS will be fully staffed separately from fire. Staffing one combined team of EMS and fire personnel poses problems when both a fire and a medical emergency are called in and may result in a delayed response to those calls.
 - d. BFRD has consistently refused to operate in compliance with the Oregon Administrative Rules, Local Ordinance MC-C-4-98, and any version of the Morrow County ASA Plan. Examples include:
 - i. Failure to respond to the EMS Advisory Committee as part of the QA Problem Resolution process laid out in the ASA Plan.
 - ii. Failure to stand down and appropriately coordinate / transfer patient care when BFRD arrives first to a medical scene.
 - iii. Repeated attempts to cancel or "stand down" MCHD ambulances from responding to medical calls.



- iv. The submission by Chief Hughes of an ambulance license application to the Oregon Health Authority including a letter from former Commissioner Russell on Morrow County letterhead, which did not have the approval of the Board of Commissioners, in an attempt to satisfy OAR 333-250-0215(1)(f).
3. A competing service in Boardman would impact MCHD's eligibility for enhanced federal funding and would eliminate that funding across the District's entire ambulance service:
 - a. The District currently subsidizes EMS services to cover a loss of **\$550,000 per year** per staffed location. If the District loses the enhanced federal funding, the annual deficit increases to **\$900,000 per year** per staffed location for a **total deficit of \$2,700,000 per year** across the county.
 - b. The purpose of a health district is to provide medical services to communities that otherwise could not support such services as in the case of EMS in Morrow County. Tax dollars are used to provide these health services to help our communities stay vital and healthy. MCHD does not have sufficient funds to subsidize EMS services at \$2,700,000 per year and as such, that financial burden would fall to Morrow County, who ultimately has the legal responsibility to provide ambulance services to **all** of Morrow County.