

TETON COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
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## **Fire Based EMS in Teton County**

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In the spirit of improving the Emergency Medical Services in Teton County, the Teton County Fire Protection District has submitted a plan with the following goals:

1. Improve the level of patient care as currently received by the EMS system in Teton County.
2. Run two front-line ambulances 24/7 with three personnel in each.
3. Substantially cut the current taxes paid by the community for EMS service.
4. Improve scene management during all emergencies.

The Teton County Fire Protection District has been a part of the EMS System in Teton County since 2007 when they received a non-transport EMT Basic license from Idaho's EMS governing entity. Prior to 2007, the Teton Valley Ambulance Service, as contracted by the Ambulance Service District, staffed an ambulance during the day, but relied on "on-call" EMT's during the night. After the Fire District received their EMS license and staffed Station 1 with firefighters 24/7, the Ambulance Service requested that the Fire District respond to the medical calls in order to help with their staffing. They have since become a vital and necessary part of the EMS system.

In January, 2012 the Fire District applied for a Paramedic level, non-transport license which will be issued in February. With the addition of this paramedic license from Idaho EMS, the Fire District will be operating on the same level as the Teton Valley Ambulance Service.

In an effort to improve the EMS system in Teton County, it is important to note the following:

- » Running two front line, professionally staffed ambulances will greatly shorten the response time in all areas of the county.
- » Running ambulances out of the fire stations will eliminate the need to run two emergency vehicles to most medical emergencies, thus saving the tax payers the cost of running two vehicles as is currently the case.
- » On-scene management will become more efficient and effective since all responders will answer to one Incident Commander.
- » Since the Fire District already has the infrastructure in place, they will be able to provide a paramedic ambulance transport service for half the cost of the current service. A detailed outline of these savings can be found in subsequent sections of this document.

In short, a Fire-Based EMS system in Teton County will greatly benefit all members of our community through a significantly decreased response time and a substantial savings in tax dollars. Following sections of this document will outline the details of the Fire Districts plan including sections on operating logistics and financial planning.

### **Operating Logistics**

The Teton County Fire Protection District is an all-hazard response entity and responds to all Fire, EMS, Hazmat and Vehicle Extrication emergencies. With this infrastructure in place, the Fire District is able to continue to meet the goals as outlined above. Both Station 1 (Driggs ) and Station 2 (Victor) are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and respond as necessary to ensure the safety of our public. In addition, Station 3 (Tetonia) is staffed with one firefighter during business hours and responds as necessary. Further, the Fire District currently employs an additional 12 paid call, reserve firefighter/EMT’s (with a capacity of up to 30) who are ready to respond at a moment’s notice.

Based on the location of the County’s population, it was an easy decision for the Fire District to staff a station in Victor since 1/3 of the population lives in that area as is demonstrated by Figure 1. Further, an added front line ambulance in this area will benefit the entire community as patients will not have to wait for personnel to be “called in” during those times when there are two simultaneous medical emergencies.

Of our 15 full time, career staff on shifts, six are currently trained to the paramedic level, and with the addition of three firefighter/paramedics, our paramedic trained staff will rise to nine. It is further expected that at least one more firefighter will reach the paramedic level by summer of 2012, increasing our paramedic staffing numbers to 10. This staffing is adequate to provide two paramedics on shift around the clock and doubles the number of paramedics on shift from current practices.

The Fire District’s staffing model outlines the addition of three firefighter/paramedics and all current Ambulance Service personnel are encouraged to apply. Additionally, since the Fire District has a pool of paid-call, reserve firefighters, all of the current part

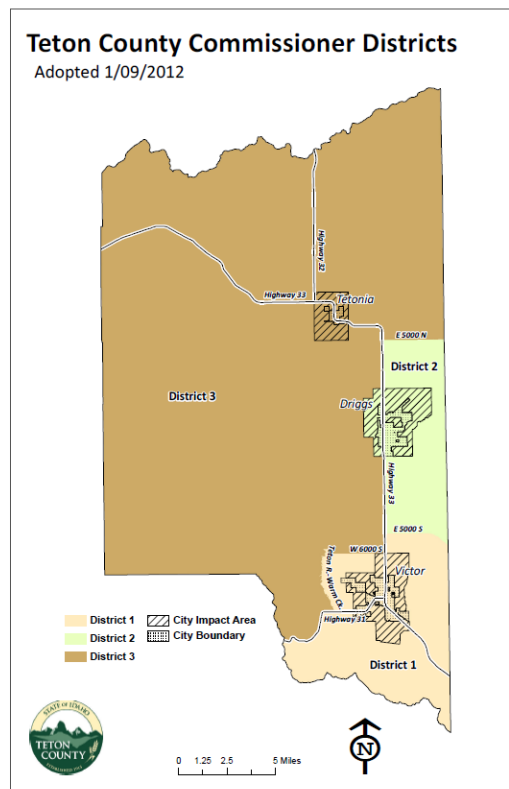


Figure 1

time ambulance personnel would be welcomed into the Fire District. There is room for everyone. In the end, this will not only make the Fire District a better entity, but will also provide a better, well rounded EMS system to the county.

Outlined below is a summary of the Fire Districts plan for operations.

Program Administration: At the beginning of Fiscal Year 2012, the Teton County Fire Protection District chose to lower taxes by 14% and with that decision did not fund the Division Chief of EMS and Training position. The plan has been to re-staff this position in Fiscal Year 2013. It is this position that will administer the Fire District's EMS program. This is a full time, day work position that will concentrate on the administration of the Fire District's EMS program including EMS operations and all EMS training.

Paramedic Training: The Fire District has a detailed and competent training program (known as a Total Program Management System) in place to keep up the skills of all our firefighters. This system ensures that all EMS skills are kept proficient, ensures that all Continuing Education Units are met, and provides regular, hands-on skill verification. This program has been and will continue to be administered by the Division Chief of EMS and Training.

Further, all of the Fire District's fire-based paramedics will enjoy the advantages of being a part of a larger whole. Nationally, the fire service enjoys a camaraderie second to none, and historically individual departments do what it takes to ensure the success of their fellow departments. To that end, the Teton County Fire Protection District already has agreements in place with the Idaho Falls Fire Department and the Pocatello Fire Department. Both of these departments run far more EMS calls than are run in Teton County, and both of these departments do and have allowed our paramedics to run with their ambulances, providing them first-rate pre-hospital patient care experience. Further, the Fire District has relationships that include large metro fire departments to provide pre-hospital internships for the Fire District's paramedics and will continue to expand further possibilities.

Touching on the discussion of pre-hospital patient care and in-hospital patient care, there is no doubt that EMT's working in a hospital setting receive good experience in providing care during a controlled, in-hospital clinical setting. However, this is significantly different from receiving pre-hospital care in often very chaotic emergency settings. The Fire District would like to explore opportunities to provide their paramedics training experience in both settings through the utilization of relationships with the Teton Valley Hospital, Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center, Idaho Falls Fire Department, Pocatello Fire Department and large metro departments in our part of the country.

Billing Administration: The Fire District will contract with an outside billing service whose compensation is based on commission, providing them the incentive to secure as many bills as possible. As outlined in the Financial Planning section below, the Fire District expects to receive the same fees as the Teton Valley Hospital has received in the past.

Other fire departments in South East Idaho use this type of a billing service and have experienced a great deal of success. The billing service to be used works for many counties in South East Idaho and boasts a collection rate of over 90%.

Staffing Logistics: When discussing staffing logistics, it is important to compare our staffing plan to how staffing is currently managed. When discussing response logistics, fire departments talk about first due and second due geographic locations. A first due vehicle is one that is stationed closest to the emergency. A second due vehicle is one that is the second closest to the emergency. In our county, the first due for Station 1 is the Driggs area and north while the first due for Station 2 is the Victor area.

- » Single, One Apparatus Medical Emergency: In the event of a single medical emergency, the closest ambulance will respond with their company of three fire personnel. There will not be a need to respond with more than one vehicle. The second company of three personnel will be ready for a second emergency. In the event this emergency is located in the south end of the county, a staffed ambulance in Victor will greatly reduce the response and transport time for these patients.
  - *Current Practices: The Ambulance will respond from the Teton Valley Hospital along with the closest engine. In the case of an emergency in the Victor area, Engine 20 will often arrive prior to the Ambulance to begin patient care.*
- » Two Medical Emergencies Occurring Simultaneously: In the event of two medical emergencies, each of the front line ambulances will respond with their company of three personnel. Each station will take their front line ambulance to one of the emergencies and will transport to the hospital as necessary.
  - *Current Practices: In the event of two emergencies, the Fire District will respond to both emergencies with both of their staffed engines and Ambulance 1 will respond to one of the emergencies from the Teton Valley Hospital. The Ambulance Service will have to call back for personnel to staff a second ambulance. This has the potential to cause a transport delay for the second patient.*
- » Three Medical Emergencies Occurring Simultaneously: While this is a very unlikely event in our county, when the second front line ambulance responds to a second incident, the Duty Chief on call will tone out for personnel to staff one of the stations. Historically, when toned out, the Fire District receives a large turnout, often within 10 minutes of the call.

- *Current Practices: As this has not happened in recent history, it could be assumed that engines would respond to each of the two emergencies, Ambulance 1 would respond to one of the emergencies and would call back for personnel to staff a second ambulance. In the event of a third call, the Ambulance Service would have to call back a third ambulance and/or the Fire District would break off from one of the emergencies to attend to the third emergency.*
- » Grand Targhee Emergency: Historically, Grand Targhee requests 80 patient transports from the resort to the Teton Valley Hospital. During these emergencies, the Fire District has conservatively allotted a call time of three hours for each emergency. The Fire District would send Station 1's ambulance with two personnel to Grand Targhee and would call back "fill-in" personnel to fill out the staffing at Station 1. In the event of a second emergency in the north end of the county, Station 1's staff of three would respond (one already on shift, and two who were called back).
  - *Current Practices: Ambulance 1 responds to Grand Targhee from the Teton Valley Hospital. While Ambulance 1 is gone, if there is a second emergency, the closest engine responds and the Ambulance Service tones out for additional personnel to staff a second ambulance.*
- » Structure Fire and a Medical Emergency Occurring Simultaneously: In the event of a structure fire, the first due engine and ambulance will respond – two personnel in the engine and one in the ambulance. The second due engine will also respond, leaving the second due ambulance at the station. During emergencies such as these, the Fire District receives a large turnout from both off-duty, career firefighters and from the paid call, reserve personnel. When the second due station is staffed with call-back personnel, they will staff the second ambulance and will stay in that area. When call-back personnel respond to the first due station, they will take another vehicle to the fire as is the current practice. Once on scene, fire personnel will be dedicated to the on-scene ambulance. In the event of an unrelated medical emergency during the structure fire, the closest ambulance will respond to the call. If the call is in the area of the second due station, then that staffed ambulance will take the call. If it is in the area of the structure fire, then the ambulance on-scene will respond to the call. The Fire District's current staffing model during structure fires will allow for this type of a response.
  - *Current Practices: In the event of a structure fire, Ambulance 1 responds from Teton Valley Hospital in the event of on-scene injuries to the public or to firefighters. If there is another emergency, they are released from the fire to attend to the medical emergency. In the event of a large fire, there have been*

*times when the Ambulance Service has called in a second ambulance to cover EMS emergencies.*

- » Emergency Inter-facility Patient Transports: In the event of an unscheduled emergency patient transport, the ambulance from Station 1 in Driggs will transport the patient with a staff as needed and a second crew will be called to fill in while the transport crew is gone. Until a second crew arrives, the company of personnel from Station 2 will cover the emergency response.
- » Non-emergency Inter-facility Patient Transports: In the event of a scheduled inter-facility patient transport, the Fire District will have had time to call on personnel for this event. This will be handled with a transport call back list, similar to how our current staffing model is handled. This is not different from how the Teton Ambulance Service handles such an incident.

Continuity of Care: The continuity of care for a patient can be defined as seamless transitions for a patient as they are transferred from specialty to specialty. From the specialty of pre-hospital care provided by the paramedics, to the specialty of emergency department treatment provided by emergency department nurses and doctors, to the specialty of surgery provided by the nurses and doctors of the operating room, all need to interact in a professional, seamless manner. The paramedic whose specialty lies in field patient care cannot be expected to provide efficient care in the operating room – that specialty is left to the Operating Room personnel. A continuity of care should refer to how professional the transitions take place.

The Fire District fully expects that when the firefighter/paramedics bring a patient into the emergency room, they will continue care as long as necessary as dictated by the emergency department personnel as is the current practice. However, it can be assumed that there will be a point where their skills as paramedics would no longer be appropriate for an emergency department. This overlapping of care is the Fire Districts vision of a seamless, professional continuity of care, allowing Fire District personnel and Hospital personnel to work together as a team.

Transition Plan: Similar to the idea of continuity of care, a seamless transition plan must be put in place. By February, 2012 the Fire District will have obtained their Paramedic Level, Non-Transport license from Idaho EMS. At this point, the Fire Districts paramedics (many of whom completed their initial training together with the Ambulance Service paramedics) can work side by side with the Ambulance Service to provide the public with unparalleled care.

By early summer of 2012, the Fire District will obtain their Paramedic Level, Transport Service through Idaho EMS and will begin providing an ambulance

service for the City of Victor. In addition, the Fire District will work in a mutual aid agreement with the current Teton Valley Ambulance Service. By housing an ambulance at Station 2 (Victor), the firefighter/paramedics in Victor will provide a quicker response to those in need in that part of the county. In order to provide this service, the Fire District would need to obtain one ambulance from the Teton County Ambulance Service District.

After working together for a number of months, the Fire District would have interviewed and hired the appropriate personnel for the transition prior to the end of the 2012 Fiscal Year. On October 1, 2012 (at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2013), the Fire District would take the remaining ambulances and begin the transport ambulance service as outlined above.

Dispatch Services: The current budget for Dispatch Services is \$214,960. Of this budget, the Fire District pays \$60,000, the Ambulance District pays \$83,000 and the Sheriff's Office pays \$71,960. For the sake of equity, the Fire District will agree to pay a portion equal to 2/3's of the Dispatch Services budget. Assuming the amount will be similar, the Fire District will pay 2/3's of the budget – approximately \$143,300. Half of this amount will be dedicated from the proposed ambulance service budget as outlined below.

Medical Liability Insurance: Personnel from the Fire District are fully covered in their duties by Idaho Counties' Risk Management Program (ICRMP) as has been the case since the Fire District became a part of the EMS system.

Community Service: For years the Teton County Fire Protection District has been a vital part of the close knit community in which we live. Recently we have provided personnel to cover events such as Skijoring, Music on Main, County Parades, July 4<sup>th</sup> Events, Athletic Events, Rodeos and more. The Fire District will continue this tradition of service to the public.



<b>2013 Fire Based Ambulance Service Budget</b>	
Base Wages	\$126,390.00
Call Back Wages	\$7,200.00
Standby Wages (Volunteer Incentive Program)	\$20,000.00
Transfer Wages	\$30,000.00
Benefits	\$37,631.00
Payroll Taxes	\$9,669.00
Supplies/Equipment	\$20,000.00
Training/Travel	\$10,000.00
Outside Billing Services	\$9,163
Medical Director	\$6,000.00
Ambulance Maintenance and Repair	\$12,000.00
Fuel	-
Depreciation: Ambulance Replacement	\$60,000.00
Dispatch	\$71,500
<b>Total New EMS Related Expenses to the Fire District</b>	<b>\$419,553.00</b>

- » Base Wages: This refers to the wages to be incurred by hiring three new firefighter/paramedics.
- » Call Back Wages: This amount refers to the wages set aside to cover those times when an ambulance is either responding to Grand Targhee, or when they are on an extended emergency call. This number represents what it would cost to bring in two firefighter/paramedics to cover 80 emergency calls to Grand Targhee with each call lasting three hours. This is a conservative number as emergencies at Grand Targhee rarely take three hours.
- » Standby Wages: These wages represent an incentive program to have our paid call, reserve firefighters spend time at their respective station. During an emergency they would respond as required. Additionally, this will also be an opportunity for all of our paid call, reserve personnel keep their EMS and Firefighting skills up to date.
- » Transfer Wages: This represents the wages it would take to cover inter-facility transfers. This amount is based on the historical 100 annual transfers, and we have budgeted two firefighter/paramedics, five hours for each transfer.
- » Benefits & Payroll Taxes: These are actual numbers to cover the three firefighter/paramedics employee benefits and payroll taxes.
- » Supplies & Equipment: This line item will cover the Fire District's medical consumable expenses based on two front-line ambulances and one transfer ambulance.
- » Outside Billing Services: An outside agency will be contracted to bill and collect fees for services rendered. Their fee is 5.5% of all monies collected and is based wholly on their ability to collect the funds, making them diligent in their task. The amount, \$9,163 is based on the projected \$166,600 of revenue collected.

Any monies above this amount will be subject to the 5.5% fee, however, we will have collected an additional 94.5%.

- » Ambulance Maintenance and Repair: As the Fire District currently maintains the ambulances, this number represents a conservative amount for maintenance and repair.
- » Depreciation for Ambulance Replacement: This represents the depreciation for the ambulances and is an allotment for an ambulance to be replaced every three years.
- » Dispatch: As outlined above, while the Fire District will cover two thirds of the dispatch services, the ambulance service will be expected to cover one third - \$71,500

<b>2013 Tax Funds Required for Fire Based EMS</b>	
New EMS Expenses as Outlined Above	\$419,553.00
Less: Expected Collected Revenue from Fees	(\$166,600.00)
<b>Tax Funds Needed for Fire Based EMS Service</b>	<b>\$252,953.00</b>
<b>Savings to the tax-paying public of Teton County (\$252,953 vs. \$622,000)</b>	
	<b>59.3%</b>
	<b>\$369,047</b>

Given the anticipated Fire Based EMS budget required of \$419,553 minus the fees collected of \$166,600, the Fire District will need an additional \$252,953 to run a Fire Based EMS system. Where the current Ambulance District budget is \$622,000, we are able to save the tax payers \$369,047! This is a savings of almost 60%!

Conclusion

With the ultimate goal of providing exemplary patient care, a great deal of effort has been put forth by the Fire District to maximize efficiencies in the EMS system by utilizing available resources and reducing unnecessary expenses. They will provide two front line ambulances and will send only one vehicle to most medical emergencies. The Fire Districts staffing model of combining both career, full time personnel in conjunction with paid call, reserve staff provides Teton County with a unique opportunity to improve our current EMS system.

In addition to providing Teton County with two front line ambulances, The Fire District has demonstrated above that they can save the tax payers of Teton County almost 60% in taxes if the county were to adopt a Fire Based EMS system.