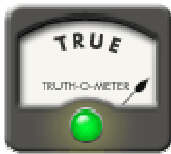


Review of East Moline Ambulance Fact Sheet

The following represents a review of the East Moline Fire Department Fact Sheet, using components of the Fire Department Proposal for Ambulance Services presented to the City Council.

“On May 1, 2010 the fire department schedule change will increase the minimum number of firefighters on duty from the current seven (7) to nine (9). This schedule change will add \$188,000 dollars in additional costs to the department.”



Through binding arbitration, costing the City of East Moline a large amount of taxpayer dollars, the schedule will change from 24 hours on and 72 hours off to the proposed 24 hours on and 48 hours off. This change will bring East Moline in line with most fire departments in the area and cause the firefighters to work more hours. The increase in hours will add an estimated \$188,000 dollars in firefighter salaries.

“To achieve the same level of staffing without the schedule change the department would have needed to hire eight (8) firefighters at a cost of over \$480,000.”



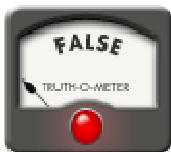
Adding eight (8) paid firefighters will likely cost \$480,000. The city should add these staff to improve firefighter safety. The city does not have to add these staff, and does not have to change the schedule to increase staffing. The staffing proposal is based on a National Fire Protection Agency Standard (NFPA) titled NFPA 1710 which addresses a standard of staffing for structure fires and other fire department related calls. This standard is not a mandate and is not legally binding. What the department is not telling the public is that there are other ways to reach that level of staffing, including supplementing staff with volunteers such as in the Bettendorf Fire Department Model in Bettendorf, IA or to request mutual aid of other fire departments, which is a common practice in the fire service and also addressed in the written plan from East Moline Fire Department, EMFD, for ambulance services after the proposed changes. A question becomes why is the city so eager to request mutual aid for ambulance service, but not for fire coverage?

“Because the schedule change increases the number of firefighters on duty and the fire department is already trained, licensed, and provides ambulance level emergency medical services to all residents, the \$188,000 in additional cost can be offset by the revenue generated by the transport fees of one ambulance.”



There are several issues here. It is true that the fire department is trained and licensed at the paramedic level. It is false that the fire department provides so-called “ambulance level emergency medical services.” EMFD currently operates on a set of medical protocols that eliminate some of the procedures and medications that are included in the protocols used by Illini Ambulance. This occurs because the fire department does not transport patients, and is allowed to operate on a separate medical standard. The \$188,000 may be offset by ambulance revenue, but this does not take into account the additional expenses of an additional vehicle, medical supplies and other expenses associated with operating an ambulance.

“If the fire department purchases and operates its own ambulance the department will receive, after ambulance expenses, over \$140,000 in revenue in the first year and \$220,000 in the second year of operation. In other words – the ambulance will pay for itself and needed extra fire protection without additional costs to residents.”



There is no way to estimate revenue of a single ambulance operating in the City of East Moline. There are multiple issues including calls that occur within one hour of each other, actual reimbursement from billed charges, differences in costs appreciated by other departments and/or services that have different purchasing power. There is no doubt that some funds will be recovered from billing, however the numbers are likely overestimated. The city is attempting to start a business based on a business plan, not hard facts and numbers. In addition, there is not even one employee of the fire department that has any experience in ambulance service management. Since Illini Ambulance operates at a loss, despite a \$200,000 tax subsidy that will not change, it is unlikely a new service will be lucrative, having to purchase all new equipment.

“The new revenue will come primarily from the fire department’s direct billing to Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance companies.”



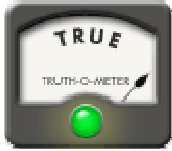
or The fire department’s proposal has illustrated that they will use a billing company for billing patients, this is not direct billing. This company will withhold a percentage of funds as a fee for their services, and represents a completely new cost to the delivery of emergency medical services in the city as a whole. There is a possibility the department has flopped their stance and will actually direct bill the patient, which would result in the need to hire an additional administrative staff member which is not represented in any of the proposed expenses. The statement also leaves out that Medicare is up to 9 months behind on reimbursing healthcare providers, representing additional budget shortfalls that will be funded by the taxpayer.

“Residents will gain increased fire protection from the dual trained firefighter/paramedics and will receive quicker ambulance response times from a fire department ambulance responding from the downtown East Moline fire station.”



Because the additional firefighters will be staffing an ambulance, there is a possibility that the ambulance would be on a call, resulting in no net change in the fire response to a fire. The fire department has reported that this would happen infrequently, but truly cannot be predicted. Though an ambulance responding from the downtown station may decrease response time to a portion of the city, it is clear that East Moline Fire Department will always respond to an EMS call if their vehicle is in Illinois and available to take a call. In addition, Illini Ambulance has offered to station a vehicle in the City, both reducing response time and maintaining a larger, more flexible response system. Currently, Illini Ambulance employs a system status management plan using multiple ambulances, which ensures that residents are getting the closest of multiple ambulances as opposed to only one available ambulance that may be responding from as far away as Trinity Medical Center, West Campus, in Rock Island.

“If the fire department does not purchase and operate an ambulance, the additional fire protection, resulting from the May 1, 2010 schedule change, will represent a cost that will be need to be covered with tax dollars.”



This is true, but is far from the whole story. The city is not telling the public that they spent thousands of dollars to reach this decision with little to no preparation in reference to operating an ambulance. This increased expense will be absorbed by taxpayers, but is a direct result of the city's actions, and previous mistakes by allowing an expensive and uncommon union contract that paid firefighters a competitive salary for a much nicer schedule than most departments. Developing an ambulance program will likely cost the city far more than the \$188,000 they are trying to make up for. The ambulance business is just that, a business, and historically around the country it's a business that does not make much profit, if any.