

## REGION 2 – Northern NY

FONDA VILLAGE BOARD, Montgomery County, has voted 4-1 to dissolve its 139 year old Fonda Volunteer Fire Department effective 3/14/13 and contract with Mohawk Fire District for coverage in the village. The move was prompted by financial considerations. Fonda allocated about \$43,000 a year to the fire department but is estimating the Mohawk contract to cost about \$22,000 a year. The effect on village property owners insurance costs are unknown. Current Fonda VFD members have been invited to join Mohawk FD but have to go through an application process and some may not be able to meet a Fire District residency requirement. Both Fonda VFD and Mohawk Fire District have DOH issued BLS First Responder Agency Codes. Ambulance service is provided by ALS level Greater Amsterdam Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

FORT DRUM, Jefferson County, regained an aeromedical helicopter this past summer with the



establishment of an Air Methods base at the facility on 8/1/12 utilizing a Eurocopter BK117 twin-engine helicopter that has a maximum speed of about 155 mph, range of 336 miles and service ceiling of 15,010 feet. The post has been without a designated medical air transport service since 2007 when Drum's Military Assistance to Safety and Traffic program was reassigned to Fort Lewis, WA. Fort Drum consists of 107,265 acres. The fort is home to the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division. Its mission includes command of active component units assigned to the installation, provide administrative and logistical support to tenant units, support to tenant units, support to active and reserve units from all services in training at Fort Drum, and planning and support for the mobilization and training of almost 80,000 troops annually. It had a population of 12,955 at the 2010 census. The on-site helicopters will fly injured soldiers to regional hospitals. Previously, injured people in need of air transport would have to wait for a helicopter from Syracuse, which takes more than half an hour to arrive. Air Methods will use facilities at Fort Drum to house its helicopter and equipment. The company's presence in the north country began in August, when Air Methods began providing medical helicopter services under the name LifeNet in Watertown. Potsdam's LifeNet station began operations in September. The two LifeNet stations will work together to provide transports to hospitals from incidents across the north country, while the Fort Drum station will be focused on the post exclusively.

HAMILTON COUNTY emergency medical service issues are reaching a critical mass according to a September article in *the Hamilton County Express*. According to the paper, "The unthinkable is happening, with some squads sometimes unable to respond to a call for help. The county's high median age, the fact that most EMS volunteers work and onerous state regulations all contribute to the problem".

Hamilton's 1,808 square miles are located entirely within Adirondack Park. At 5,379, according to the 2000 census, it is the least populous of New York's 62 counties and is also the most sparsely populated county in the eastern half of the United States.

Ambulance service in the county is provided by 5 independent volunteer ambulance squads and 4 volunteer fire departments. Speculator is the only VAC at the EMT-P level. The other VACs are at the EMT-CC level. One VFD is at the EMT-I level while three are at the BLS level. There are no non-transporting first responder services listed on the NYS DOH web site.

Coverage issues cited include:

- In the southern part of the county, Hope Volunteer Ambulance Corps shut down in 2010 when its membership dropped to four.
- Piseco Volunteer Ambulance Corps is teetering, sometimes unable to provide daytime coverage during the workweek.
- Wells Volunteer Ambulance Corps sometimes cannot muster a crew.
- Speculator Volunteer Ambulance Corps was responding when Piseco VAC could not get up a crew, but is not licensed to operate in the Town of Arietta and had to stop due to state regulations.

- In the northern parts of the county, Blue Mountain Lake Volunteer Ambulance Corps depends on Indian Lake VAC and Long Lake Rescue Squad for advanced life support but is not in danger of folding.
- The towns of Inlet and Long Lake had to hire ALS personnel to provide weekday daytime coverage.
- Inlet VAC pays a paramedic to stand by at its station during the summer months and one weekend a month the rest of the year.
- Long Lake Rescue Squad has three paid, full-time ALS personnel, which necessitated billing for transport.
- In September 2011 Indian Lake initiated paid ALS coverage from 6:00 AM. To 6:00 PM provided by a staffing service, and started billing for services to cover the increased expense.
- Raquette Lake depends on ALS providers from Inlet, Old Forge and Woodgate to assist in life-threatening situations.

Regulatory issues include:

- Bureau of EMS advising mutual aid plans are not intended to substitute for “an EMS agency’s continued, routine, ongoing or frequent inability to [respond] due to staffing and/or equipment shortages.”
- NYS requirement that members of fire department ambulance squads also be trained firefighters.
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- State’s adoption of the National Education Standards for EMS increasing hours for various courses.
- Elimination of EMT-I level causing providers make a choice to advance or drop back to basic level.
- Use of on-line courses not being allowed.

The Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors is indicated by the paper to believe NYS is pushing for paid medical services and is quoted in the article as asking, “Would we be more proactive to sit down with a paid service and see what we need to do to have them come in?”

SARATOGA SPRINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT, Saratoga County, expects to take in \$710,000 in ambulance service revenue in 2013, down from original estimates of more than \$1 million. The department converted from an ALS 1<sup>st</sup> response service and took over city ambulance transports in February 2012 from non-profit Saratoga Emergency Medical Services, which reportedly took in between \$800,000 to \$900,000 from providing EMS for Saratoga Springs. The city’s 2013 budget projects \$650,000 in revenue from ambulance transports, \$45,000 in rent from back-up and local non-emergency provider Empire Ambulance and \$15,000 for ALS services. The money will be used to cover seven firefighter positions that had been funded by a one-time \$360,000 federal grant plus adding 2 new firefighter positions and a dispatcher. Currently, EMS responses include an ambulance and engine company. Long term costs may be impacted by increased pension liabilities for the new employees. Saratoga Springs FD responds to about 200 fire calls annually and has provided EMS 1<sup>st</sup> responder service since 1992. The city council is scheduled to review the program in mid 2013.