

Ambulance Department

December 9, 2023

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Lac du Flambeau Ambulance Department

INTRODUCTION

At the town board meeting on December 6, 2023, town officials approved “under protest” an [Ambulance Service Program Contract](#) with Oneida County in the amount of \$291,514 in order to sustain services for 2024. Money from the ambulance fund will be used to pay the fee. ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)).

Like other towns, Lac du Flambeau has been wrestling with the difficult issue of how to provide excellent ambulance service in a cost-effective manner. Two recent important documents on the topic are available below:

["The Reliability of Wisconsin's 911 Ambulance Response"](#)

["Recommendations to Provide Ambulance Service in a Viable and Sustainable EMS Model"](#)

CHRONOLOGY 2022-2023

September 1, 2022. In a [memorandum \(September 1, 2022\)](#) to the Lac du Flambeau Town Chair from the Oneida County Sheriff, the town was advised that a long-standing agreement (November 6, 2013: [Oneida County Emergency Management proposal](#)) between the county and town for the provision of ambulance services would soon end. The memorandum includes the following statements, italics added.

The purpose of this memo is to advise you that Oneida County intends to terminate our contract for ambulance services with the Town of Lac du Flambeau beginning January 1, 2023. Oneida County is interested in re-negotiating this contract if the Town desires.

The ambulance costs to Oneida County have risen dramatically in the last few years and we can no longer continue to operate status quo, as it is not in the best interest of Oneida County taxpayers.

The memorandum also proposes that Lac du Flambeau’s share in a new agreement be a “fixed subsidy” of “\$248,400” plus some additional costs. For comparison, according to an [invoice \(June 28, 2022\)](#) submitted to Chair Gaulke by Oneida County, the town was charged \$55,245.42 for services provided in 2021.

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October 18, 2022. Article in the October 18, 2022, edition of the Lakeland Times: [Arbor Vitae, Lac du Flambeau negotiate Oneida County ambulance contracts.](#)

October 19, 2022. Sheriff Grady Hartman addressed the issue at the town board's regular meeting on October 19, 2022 ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)). The minutes of the meeting include the following statements (italics added).

Sheriff Grady Hartmann was present to relate how the previous contract had been billed and what prompted the changes in charging for the contract starting 01/01/2023. This is a flat fee vs a formula based on run numbers and equalized value from the previous contract. Sheriff Hartmann stated he did not have the authority to approve a reduction but would be amenable to an adjustment for the first year, which he could take back to the County Board for approval. Decision to review the data, options and discuss at next meeting.

October 25, 2022. Article in the October 25, 2022, edition of the Lakeland Times: [Arbor Vitae town board Oks Oneida County ambulance contract – Lac du Flambeau town board to again discuss ambulance contract issue on Nov. 2.](#)

November 2, 2022. The town chair provided an update on the situation at the town board's regular meeting on November 2, 2022 ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)). The minutes of the meeting include the following statements (italics added).

Chairman Gaulke provided an update that the contract was initially reviewed by Attorney Harrold, however he had requested some clarifications from Oneida County. Since these had not been secured, the attorney's review is not yet complete. Supervisor Cobb requested a special meeting to be set for November 21, 2022 at 1:00 pm with our attorney present to discuss his review. Additionally, she stated we needed to look at the numbers from 2021 to have an idea of where we are. Supervisor Hanson had concerns that we were being treated like other towns yet have our own department.

November 14, 2022. The town board addressed the issue again at a special town board meeting on November 14, 2022 ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)). In a [proposed agreement to provide ambulance services for 2023 only](#), the amount is reduced from \$248,400 to \$178,224. The minutes of the meeting include the following statements (italics added).

Discussion was held on the contract presented by Oneida County Ambulance Service Program for the period of 1/1/23 to 12/31/2023. The report states that the computation of the percentage factor for Lac du Flambeau would be \$178,224. In previous years that amount was much less. Attorney Greg Harrold is still working with Oneida County Emergency Management in getting some additional reports which were to be sent to him but did not receive by today's meeting. He will be following up with them for the reports and go over them. At this time, we will table this item and we will put on a future agenda.

November 15, 2022. An article in the November 15, 2022, edition of the Lakeland Times: [Oneida County public safety approves ambulance contracts – Contract is on Lac du Flambeau town board's Nov. 14 agenda.](#)

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November 18, 2022. An article in the November 18, 2022, edition of the Lakeland Times: [Lac du Flambeau town board balks at Oneida County ambulance charge.](#)

December 20, 2022. An article in the December 20, 2022, edition of the Lakeland Times: [Lac du Flambeau, Oneida County public safety committee to meet – The proposed \\$178,000 contract for ambulance to the town in 2023 is the issue.](#)

January 1, 2023. The contract between Oneida County and the Town of Lac du Flambeau on providing ambulance services to Lac du Flambeau ended on January 1, 2023

January 5, 13, 17, 2023. The town board held special town board meetings on January 5, 2023 ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)), January 13, 2023 ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)), and January 17, 2023 ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)) to discuss the provision of ambulance services given the contract between Oneida County and Town ended on January 1, 2023.

Officials from the Town, Tribe, and Oneida County participated in all three meetings. The result is the town will pay Oneida County to continue providing services through 2023, while the town looks for alternatives for future years.

Click for a summary of the January 13 meeting in the [Lakeland Times](#), January 10, 2023. Click for a summary of the issue and all three meetings in the [Lakeland Times](#), January 20, 2023.

April 28, 2023. The [April 28, 2023, edition of the Lakeland Times](#) includes an article stating that, “The towns of Arbor Vitae and Lac du Flambeau have received proposed contracts from Oneida County for ambulance services in 2024.” The article also states, “The contract proposed for Lac du Flambeau for 2024 is \$291,514.” The current contract, for 2023, is “\$178,000”. Moreover, the article quotes Lac du Flambeau town chair, Matt Gaulke, as saying, “ ‘The (ambulance) contract isn’t due until December or January but we’re gonna have to talk about it...probably in June.’ “

May 11, 2023. The town board and EMS personnel discussed taking first steps to establish a five-year EMS plan at the town board meeting on May 11, 2023. This was due in part to having received a contract proposal for 2024 from Oneida County in the amount of \$291,514 for continuing to provide ambulance services. ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), Minutes Pending)

May 11, 2023. After conferring in a closed session at the town board meeting on May 11, 2023, the board directed Chair Gaulke to meet with Fire Chief Wegner to discuss issues that were identified in the closed session ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)). The minutes of the meeting include the following statement (Italics added):

Motion by Supervisor Hanson to direct the Chair to hold discussion with Chief Wegner regarding some issues we discussed during closed session. Motion seconded by Supervisor Cobb. Motion carried.

June 7, 2023. At the town board’s regular meeting on June 7, 2023, the town chair acknowledged that the fire chief is no longer serving the town. Town officials then discussed four topics related to the fire/ambulance department: ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#))

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EMT and fire chief appointments. Town officials appointed Mike Zimmerman and Chris Mayer as “interim” chiefs for the ambulance department and fire department, respectively, for 90 days, during which time the town will implement a process for hiring a new fire chief.

EMT pay proposal per 5-year plan. Consideration of the item was tabled upon a recommendation from Mike Zimmerman.

Fire/ambulance department equipment. Town officials spoke briefly about contracting for servicing ambulance department equipment. Discussion on fire department equipment was limited due to Chris Mayer being on call at the time.

Fire Dues Audit. The town chair acknowledged the board had just received the [2% Fire Dues Audit Report](#). Even so, he said the report states that the fire department is in “substantial compliance” with various rules and regulations. When questioned on what town officials will do about the suggestions for improvement also stated in the report, he indicated those will be addressed as needed after the board has had a chance to review them.

The history of the 2% Fire Dues distribution goes back to 1870, when the Wisconsin Statutes required that all insurers contribute a percentage of their fire insurance premium to the local municipality to support the purchase of fire equipment. This concept continued with periodic modifications of the program. Today, the 2% Dues Program is supported by 2% of all premiums for fire insurance written on Wisconsin commercial and residential properties. Each year, insurers are required to report and pay the dues to the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI.) In the mid-1970s fire department inspection programs became part of the 2% Dues qualifications. (ss. 60.55 (2), Wis. Stats.). [[Wisconsin Fire Service Guidebook, Revised July 2019](#)]

July 12, 2023. At the town board meeting on July 12, 2023, Norm Wetzel, on behalf of *Citizens for Education in Town Governance* (CETG), reviewed a letter submitted to the town board originally on June 21, 2023 ([letter to the town board](#)), asking the board to initiate a forensic audit of the fire/ambulance department's finances. The board took no action on the request, though Supervisor Hanson said he is inclined to support such an audit ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)). The letter was in part prompted by the town chair's declaration on June 7, 2023, that the fire chief no longer serves the town ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)).

Also at the July 12 meeting, the town chair acknowledged a [letter](#) submitted by Interim Fire Chief, Chris Mayer, and Interim Ambulance Chief, Mike Zimmerman, stating, in part, “We have recently been put in charge of our respective departments and have had a chance to review the status of equipment. Numerous items were not in working order and in need of repair”.

And also at the July 12 meeting, Mike Zimmerman reported that the town’s request to use the Tribe’s water main for the new fire station is in review.

August 16, 2023. At the town board meeting on August 16, 2023, the town chair read a report provided by the interim chiefs of the fire and ambulance departments. The interim chief of the ambulance department, Mike Zimmerman, then responded to questions. ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#))

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September 6, 2023. The town board appointed Mike Zimmerman to the position of EMS Chief. ([letter](#), [credentials](#)). ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)).

October 4, 2023. At the town board meeting on October 4, 2023, Mike Zimmerman was sworn in ([oath](#)) as EMS Chief (Ambulance Department). ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#))

October 18, 2023. At the town board meeting on October 18, 2023, EMS Chief, Mike Zimmerman, reported on recent department activity, and the town chair, Matt Gaulke, noted the status of construction of the new fire station ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), Minutes).

October 24, 2023. The [October 24 edition of the Lakeland Times](#) reported on the “first informational meeting for a possible Vilas County ambulance service.” The Lac du Flambeau town chair, Matt Gaulke, and town supervisor, Bob Hanson, both attended the meeting.

CHRONOLOGY 2013-2019

February 6, 2013. Minutes for the town board meeting held on February 6, 2013, include the following statement. Italics added.

Ambulance Department compensation: Mr. Gaulke reported he had a meeting with the ambulance department last Monday. The current rate for the EMT call is \$25.00 per run. To promote them to answer ambulance calls during the week days which has been struggling and Med 5 has had to cover he is suggesting we raise the \$25.00 per call to \$35.00 per call and also they would get an additional \$25.00 pager fee if they respond when they are on call. This increase will not affect the ambulance budget. Hopefully, this will encourage the EMT's to make the runs instead of calling in Med 5.
Mr. Gaulke also had a meeting with the Sheriff's Department, Oneida and Vilas County Emergency Management Department, Hospital EMS Department. They all had concerns about making our daily runs so they don't have to shift their ambulances around as much. Tom Wegner stated along with the suggestion from the EMT's at the meeting that if they don't make their runs on the days they have the pager they would pay a \$25.00 fine. Motion by Mr. Christensen seconded by Mrs. Schwanebeck to increase the ambulance compensation and also to allow the deputy clerk additional hours if needed to help the Chief with paper work. Motion carried. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]

March 6, 2013. Minutes for the town board meeting held on March 6, 2013, include the following statement. Italics added.

A [letter](#) was received from the sheriff's department. This is an agreement that allows Vilas County to dispatch police, fire, ambulance from here to other locations if needed or from other locations to here if needed. It allows them to cross jurisdictional boundaries. Motion by Mr. Christensen seconded by Mrs. Schwanebeck to renew the [joint agreement](#) with the county. Motion carried. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]

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September 11, 2013. Minutes for the town board meeting held on September 11, 2013, include the following statement. Italics added.

Approximately 2 weeks ago Mr. Gaulke along with Fire/Ambulance Chief Tom Wegner, Oneida County Emergency Management, and a representative from Howard Young had a meeting to discuss the situation when LDF cannot get a crew together and Vilas County needs to send out Med 5. Oneida County Emergency Management wants to set up a contract with LDF as they do with Arbor Vitae, Minocqua that when a run is made by Med 5 they will bill the town a fee based on a equalized value formula. Mr. Gaulke did receive some preliminary figures from Oneida County however they appear to be figures based on only a half year. Mr. Gaulke estimates a yearly cost might be \$23,000.00. Mr. Wegner was not present today but in his previous conversation with Mr. Gaulke stated he thought it was a fair formula and they do provide the services needed when a LDF crew cannot get together. Mr. Gaulke asked Mr. Koretenhof to get us figures from the last 5 years so some type of estimate could be made come budget time. He will try to also get a figure per run but does not know if this is possible. Motion by Mr. Hoover seconded by Mrs. Schwanebeck to table this item until more information is received and we can make a more informative decision. Motion carried. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]

September 25, 2013. Minutes for town board meeting held on September 25, 2017, include the following statement. Italics added.

Ken Kortenhof from Oneida County Emergency Management explained at today's meeting the need for the Town of Lac du Flambeau to contract with them to cover the calls when Med 5 has to be called out for emergency calls. This is just for the emergency calls not the intercept calls. A sample of the contract was sent to the town and was also sent to the town attorney for review. We have not yet had a response from the town attorney. The fee is based on a formula using equalized value of the town, county, and Oneida County Ambulance budget. The board asked if there was a way to come up with some figures for budgeting. A sample of the cost based on the figures from Jan-July came to approximately \$11,800.00 which would have to be doubled for an estimate for the entire year. The fees for these services are paid the following year after services rendered as that is how the formula is based. Mr. Kortenhof is going to try to put some other figures together along with some figures he needs from the Ambulance Chief Tom Wegner to perhaps get a better budget figure. Mr. Kortenhof also has to bring the proposal to his committee for approval but will do so after we hear from our attorney. As soon as we hear from our attorney we will contact Mr. Kortenhof and put on an upcoming agenda. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]

November 6, 2013. Minutes for the town board meeting held on November 6, 2013, include the following statements. Italics added.

Mr. Gaulke reported that we received a [letter from Attorney Harrold](#) stating he has reviewed the agreement from Oneida County Emergency Management Committee and feels it is a fair agreement and will provide a good service to the town. Any fees we would pay for this service would come from the Ambulance Fund. Motion by Mrs.

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Schwanebeck seconded by Mr. Hoover to approve the [Oneida County Emergency Management proposal](#). Motion carried

Mr. Gaulke reported that we have received the [intercept agreement with Howard Young](#) for approval. This is a separate agreement than the Oneida County proposal. This agreement is for when an intercept call needs to be sent because of IV's and meds that our EMT's cannot administer. We are charged an intercept fee of \$150.00 which is paid by the town and added to the patient billing for collection. Motion by Mrs. Schwanebeck seconded by Mr. Hoover to approve the agreement with Howard Young. Motion carried. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]

November 21, 2013. Minutes for the town board meeting held on November 21, 2013, include the following statement. Italics added.

Fire Chief Wegner reported that he has obtained a quote for 2 new ambulance vehicles and 2 Power Pro XT Cots. He has been putting this off for several years as he was not happy with the choices available. Pomasl has come out to the station to demo the new units and Mr. Wegner was impressed. He would like to recommend that 2 new 2015 ambulance vehicles along with 2 new Power Pro XT cots be purchased. The cost of these items would come out of the ambulance fund . The quoted price was \$469,490.00. If these items are paid for at time of order an additional amount of approximately \$7500.00 would be returned to us upon delivery. Motion by Mrs. Schwanebeck seconded by Mr. Hoover to go ahead with the order using the additional discount offered. Motion carried. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]

December 4, 2013. Minutes for the town board meeting held on December 4, 2013, include the following statement. Italics added.

A request was received from Lifequest our ambulance billing firm for a hardship discount on an ambulance billing. After discussion a motion by Mrs. Schwanebeck seconded by Mr. Hoover to deny the discount request. Motion carried The clerk with send the necessary paperwork to Lifequest. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]

April 17, 2018. Responding to calls for ambulance services was a topic of discussion at the Lac du Flambeau Annual Electors' Meeting on April 17, 2018. Concern was expressed about the number of calls being deferred from Lac du Flambeau to Med 5, Howard Young. The town chair said the town board will address the situation. ([Agenda](#), [Audio Recording](#), [Minutes](#)).

Minutes of the April 17, 2018, Annual Meeting include the following statements (italics added).

Mention was made that the ambulance department needs looking into to see what could make response time better. The recruitment of more volunteers is greatly needed. The town does pay for the training. The ambulance runs and reimbursement fees are available from reports from Lifequest who handles the billing and collection of ambulance runs.

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June 6, 2018. Minutes of the Town Board meeting held on June 6, 2018, include the following statements (italics added):

***Ambulance Volunteer Compensation Pay:** Mr. Gaulke stated at the Annual Town Meeting discussion was brought up regarding the ambulance run responses. Mr. Gaulke went to the last Ambulance meeting and one issue that came up was the compensation pay. Currently volunteers get a stipend of \$35.00 for a day run and \$25.00 for a night run. Weekend on call rate is \$125.00. The volunteers suggested that the rate be increased to \$45.00 for a day run and \$35.00 for a night run. They thought this would help with responses. Two volunteers are required to go on a call. We currently have 14 volunteers and are always looking for more. Signage is being looked into addressing the recruitment of new volunteers. The town does pay for the schooling. Another issue that was brought up was if they could get paid semi-annually. The clerk stated this would not be a problem as long as their reporting is done. Many volunteers are called on while they are performing their regular job and sometimes are just not able to leave their regular job. This issue of responses is not unique to Lac du Flambeau, it is statewide. Motion by Mr. Hanson seconded by Mr. Mayer to increase the call rate to \$45.00 for a day run and \$35.00 for a night run and go to semi-annual payments. Motion carried.*

***Fire/Ambulance Volunteer Workwear:** The volunteers are looking for new workwear for functional and pride purposes, such as t-shirts, jackets, high visual jackets, hats. For safety reasons this workwear would only be for the volunteers. Motion by Mr. Hanson seconded by Mr. Gaulke to have the fire/ambulance volunteers get together a wish list with costs and bring it back to the board for approval before the order is placed. Motion carried. Mr. Mayer abstained as he is fire department volunteer. [Contact town clerk for complete minutes]*

November 20, 2018. At the town's budget hearing for the 2019 budget on November 20, 2018, the Town Chair stated that volunteer ambulance personnel were still looking at clothing options and approximate costs would be reviewed at a future board meeting. ([Minutes](#))

January 8, 2019. On January 8, 2019, the town board approved spending \$3,850.50 on jackets, sweatshirts, shirts and hats selected by personnel in the Fire/Ambulance Department as a way to boost morale. Expenses for turtlenecks will be added to that amount when they are known ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)). Minutes of the Town Board meeting held on January 8, 2019, include the following statement (italics added):

An estimate came in from the fire/ambulance volunteers for a clothing request for the department. They include jackets, sweatshirts, shirts, hats, turtlenecks. Costs came to \$3850.50 plus the cost of the turtlenecks which was not available. These charges would come out of the ambulance fund. Motion by Mr. Hanson seconded by Mr. Mayer to approve the cost of \$3850.50 plus the cost of the turtlenecks. Motion carried. (Agenda, Audio, Minutes)

The purchases are in response to concerns expressed at the town's annual meeting on April 17, 2018, about the difficulty in mustering ambulance crews. The clothing purchase follows board action taken at a meeting on June 6, 2018, when it raised compensation for volunteer ambulance

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personnel to \$45 for each daytime run and to \$35 for each evening run, up from \$35 and \$25 respectively, and decided payments would be biannual rather than annual.

December 4, 2019. On December 4, 2019, the Town Board accepted a donation from the Tribe for *ambulance/fire personnel* and said it will *follow-up with a budget resolution*. The situation is described below in the minutes of the meeting, italics added ([Agenda](#), [Audio](#), [Minutes](#)).

Communication came from the LDF tribe that they have changed their policy for payment to the ambulance/fire personnel for their service. In past years they would always give an additional check to the volunteers. They do not want to continue this practice of how they process this. They want to give the town a donation of \$20,000 and have the town issue checks to the volunteers. We were not sure we could do that and the clerk consulted the auditor who in turn said we could take the donation but then we would have to follow-up with a budget amendment resolution. Gloria stated that because of IRS rules the tribe had been making the payment to the volunteer's tax free which cannot be done. They stated that because the ambulance/fire department falls under the town responsibility they want to send the donation over to the town. Gloria will also follow up on the payments. In the future the donation should be sent earlier in the year so this donation payment can be included in the 2nd payment made by the town to the volunteers. Motion by Gloria Cobb seconded by Mr. Mayer to accept the donation and follow-up with a budget amendment resolution. Motion carried.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[EMS Workforce for the 21st Century: A National Assessment](#) (2008, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

The major objective of this research has been to address issues relevant to the process of workforce planning. Research questions address the following: 1. Will the EMS workforce be of adequate size and composition to meet the needs of the U.S. population in the future? 2. How can potential workers be attracted to and encouraged to stay in the field of EMS? 3. How can adequate EMS workforce resources be available across all populations and geographic areas? 4. Do we have the data and information needed to address the future demand for and supply of EMTs and paramedics in the United States? What information is lacking and how might it be obtained?

[The Emergency Medical Services Workforce Agenda for the Future](#) (2011, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

The EMS Workforce Agenda identifies the following four components critical to developing an EMS workforce that will thrive and be a driving force for achieving integrated, community-based EMS systems: • health, safety and wellness of the EMS workforce. • education and certification • data and research • workforce planning and development

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[Volunteer Firefighters & Emergency Technician Shortages](#) (Staff Brief, Wisconsin Legislative Council)

This Staff Brief describes current Wisconsin law that is relevant to the discussion of policy options related to volunteer firefighter and EMT shortages: • Part I provides a preliminary overview of the organizational options for fire protection and EMS personnel, the classifications of employment status, and national workforce reports. • Part II briefly describes the Wisconsin Statutes that apply to fire departments and fire fighters. • Part III briefly describes the Wisconsin Statutes that apply to EMS providers and personnel. • Part IV summarizes relevant data on “rural” areas in Wisconsin. This Staff Brief was prepared by Margit Kelley, Senior Staff Attorney

[Lac du Flambeau EMT Operational Plan](#)

[Lac du Flambeau Ambulance Department Operational Procedures](#)

[Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreement](#)

[The Wisconsin EMS Association](#). This website provides information on how Wisconsin EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is set up and functions. It also provides data that are currently available by responding to numerous questions, such as,

How many ambulance services and EMT's are there in Wisconsin?

How many ambulance calls occur in Wisconsin each year?

What are the reasons that people call for an ambulance?

[Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#). The Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Section, located in the Office of Prevention and Emergency Health Care (OPEHC), is charged with developing and maintaining an EMS delivery system throughout Wisconsin. The website includes data on licensing and the number of calls.

[Chapter SPS 330 - Fire Department Safety & Health Standards](#). This chapter of the Wisconsin Administrative Code establishes minimum safety and health standards for public sector fire department employees.

[University of Wisconsin Local Government Center](#). Prepared for a town officials workshop, this document asks and answers numerous questions about fire departments in Wisconsin.

[Wisconsin Towns Association Roundtable](#). On May 18th, 2016 the Wisconsin Towns Association hosted a gathering of 20 fire, EMS, and Town officials from throughout Wisconsin to brainstorm answers to a series of questions related to shortages of volunteer firefighter and EMT personnel. This document conveys some of the issues and potential solutions discussed at the meeting.

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