

Santa Rosa County
Emergency Services Advisory Committee
July 18, 2007
2:00 p.m.
MINUTES

Members present:

James Chalmers
Stephen Cozart
Ryan Jenkins
Werner Panchenko

Members absent:

Joe Diamond
Don Vanderryt

Staff present:

Brad Baker
Deb Grinde

Agenda approved as submitted for this meeting.

Minutes for meeting held on June 27, 2007 approved as drafted with no exceptions.

Persons to Appear

None

Reports and Statistics

Reports reviewed for the month of June. It was noted that Harold VFD missed 11% which is due to the light volume. S. Cozart stated that the numbers continue to indicate a vast improvement over the past two years.

Correspondence

None

Old Business

Fire Services Plan

This committee reviewed a newspaper article from The Independent News regarding Escambia County's reorganization of their Fire Departments. The article reflects the issues that the ESAC's counterpart in Escambia County, the Fire Services Citizen's Advisory Committee, must address. Escambia County is recommending that the structure of the volunteer fire department be dissolved and it becomes one entity. It was stated that what works well for Escambia County may not work well in Santa Rosa County.

New Business

Air Ambulance Services

B. Baker explained the county's current Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN). LifeFlight holds a COPCN in order to provide air ambulance service to the county. LifeNet has requested that a COPCN be issued to them in order to be a second provider of this service. They have indicated that a COPCN is not actually necessary but would be helpful. LifeNet is currently the back up to LifeFlight and is utilized as a mutual aid agency.

The BOCC has requested that a study be completed in order to determine if it is plausible to issue a second COPCN. It has not yet been determined if the study will be done or who might complete the study. B. Baker indicated that Fitch and Associates may have a conflict of interest.

B. Baker will check into the timing of the study and advise this committee.

R. Collins, Pace, FL

Mr. Collins stated that it is his understanding that LifeNet has offered to pay for the study and that the service will be at no cost to the county. It is also his understanding that the establishment of LifeNet within Santa Rosa County will also be at no cost to the county. He also believes that the county needs to consider the rapid growth including the Jubilee plans for as many as 10,000 homes. He indicated that both the north end and the south ends of the county have many platted and approved subdivisions that will have a great impact on our future needs.

Greg Perry, Milton, FL

Mr. Perry works for LifeNet and is not speaking on their behalf. Mr. Perry stated that it has been one (1) year since the request for a COPCN has been submitted to the county by LifeNet. He said that it is not a second air service in Santa Rosa County; there is no air ambulance provider located in Santa Rosa County. LifeFlight is located in Escambia County. Mr. Perry indicated that it may be that LifeFlight will also help pay for a study if that is deemed necessary. He also states, though, that the numbers are available through the Santa Rosa County Dispatch Center. He believes that the numbers indicate that there have been nine hundred seventy-eight (978) requests for the service over the last three (3) years. It is his opinion that a \$70,000 study is not necessary when the numbers can be pulled up or made available through the Dispatch Center. B. Baker stated that we could provide the number of emergency flights.

S. Cozart questioned if the service is for a geographical area or for a percentage of calls. Mr. Perry stated that it was previously indicated that they would only service north of I-10. That is not the case. They would serve wherever they would be most needed. The intent was to be located in the center of the county, possibly the Milton area and that the closest aircraft is dispatched to the emergency calls. As an example, East Milton, Bagdad, Holley-Navarre area would be best served by an aircraft located in Okaloosa County. Baptist LifeFlight would be the closest aircraft for the south end of the county. The bottom line is that added aircraft will not hurt our situation; it can only improve the service to the citizens of Santa Rosa County.

LifeFlight is always called first because they hold the COPCN.

B. Baker pointed out that Santa Rosa County Dispatch always tries to send the closest unit. If it takes longer to determine who is the closest it may not be the quickest method to dispatch the call. It may take longer to determine who all is available to take the call. Mr. Perry asked how often we requested a unit from Okaloosa County. B. Baker did not have that information available to him at this meeting. G. Perry stated that the dispatch for LifeNet is out of the state of Nebraska.

Discussion ensued reviewing routine procedures for LifeFlight, LifeNet and Santa Rosa County dispatch centers.

G. Perry reiterated that they are not located within our county but are utilizing Santa Rosa County as a market area. Most counties have and aircraft staged within their county and at no cost to them. There is no aircraft in Santa Rosa County and he believes that it could only be advantageous and response times would improve if an aircraft was located within our county. R. Jenkins, LifeFlight, stated that he works for LifeFlight, is not speaking on LifeFlight's behalf today, and his concern is also with the response times for our county. He would like to point out that LifeFlight is currently providing service to Santa Rosa County at no cost to the county. Their dispatch center is local, aware of where the three helicopters are, and the dispatchers are familiar with the area. He feels that their longest response time is approximately fourteen (14) minutes to any location in Santa Rosa County. The average response times for the fire departments lead to delays at times also. The helicopter must wait for the fire department to respond to assist with securing a landing zone, so it may be that if your response time is only ten minutes, you may be waiting to land regardless.

He stated that his greatest concern is for his family who lives here and all of the citizens of Santa Rosa County. J. Chalmers, B. Baker and many of us have all spent many years with emergency response in our county. All of us will do what is best for Santa Rosa County.

G. Perry questioned whether the ESAC makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. S. Cozart explained that we do make those types of recommendations as an advisory committee. G. Perry asked what would be gained from the study that is not already available through the reporting system at the Communications Center.

S. Cozart stated that the format of the reports and the other types of information included in the report, less raw numbers, helped everyone to make a good decision.

K. Daughtery, Milton, FL

Mr. Daughtery stated that Baptist LifeFlight has provided a great service to our county over the years. An additional air craft, no matter which provider, should be our greatest concern. The COPCN gives exclusive rights to a particular agency. Any aircraft for Santa Rosa County is desirable. It seems that we always take a backseat to Escambia County.

It is his belief that Santa Rosa County Communications Center should determine which air service provider should be dispatched to a call. The air provider should, then, advise if their air craft is not available. Santa Rosa County's dispatch should have complete control. Ken expounded on different aspects of dispatching air ambulance calls. Mr. Daughtery believes that the air ambulance calls should be dispatched just as the medical and fire emergency calls are handled.

R. Jenkins advised that other issues must be considered when dispatching an air craft; a major difference includes FAA regulations, e.g. flight plans, crew manifests, etc.

B. Baker stated that if LifeNet gets the opportunity to operate in the county, the dispatching procedures would be adjusted to take everything into consideration.

The entire EMS dispatch process has been revamped and he clarified that the COPCN can be a political issue within the county.

Everyone needs to understand that air ambulance service is not our primary provider. It is a secondary provider. In addition, there will be no unsafe landings. The landing zone must be cleared by the Fire Departments. All of these issues are being taken into consideration with due diligence.

R. Collins, Pace, FL

Mr. Collins agrees that the new response times and other issues will have a greater impact on the rural areas. He believes that an air ambulance service setting at the Santa Rosa Medical Center would be able to provide better service to the rural areas and he would like to see something in Santa Rosa County.

Greg Perry, Milton, FL

Mr. Perry believes that the COPCN is not an intra-county issue. It involves agencies outside of Santa Rosa County. LifeFlight may indicate that they have a station located at Gulf Breeze Hospital but that is a launch pad only. They do not have a unit staged at that location. LifeNet will not put any other agency out of business by putting an aircraft in Santa Rosa County.

Mr. Perry stated that if LifeNet is on standby for Gulf Flight then LifeNet is launching; there will be no waiting, it will be an auto-launch at that time.

His belief is that the only true dispatcher is the pilot.

Mr. Perry also believes that it is amazing that the citizens of Santa Rosa County are going without an air ambulance service at any cost to them because of a study that has not been completed.

B. Baker requested that a copy of the auto-launch procedure be sent to his attention. Mr. Perry stated that the SRC dispatch center has already received a copy of this procedure but he will be happy to provide B. Baker with a copy today.

James Chalmers advised this committee that LifeGuard will select another representative to sit on the ESAC in his place. James will attend through the next meeting but will be replaced for the September meeting. James stated that he appreciated the opportunity to serve the committee and S. Cozart thanked him and told him that his efforts were appreciated.

S. Cozart requested that this item (Air Ambulance) will be moved to the Old Business in order to track the activity and remain current on any studies, etc.

R. Jenkins suggested that if it will remain an issue we should consider inviting persons from each of the air ambulance services to make a presentation to this committee. He requested that B. Baker provide some of the statistics for the air services at the same time.

G. Perry suggested that we include some of the area fire chiefs to the same meeting in order to benefit from their suggestions, in particular those chiefs from the areas that would benefit the most.

B. Baker will provide S. Cozart with names and number for the air ambulance representatives.

Hurricane Shelters

S. Cozart included this issue today after attending a meeting in the Jay area. He is concerned with the fact that there is no shelter in the Jay area. He understands that there are no shelters in the south end of the county. Those citizens are encouraged to leave the immediate area and the damage and effects of a hurricane could be considerable in that particular area.

Some discussion has occurred regarding what available buildings might be used as shelters and the condition of the structures.

Some discussion followed regarding such topics as the structure requirements, the hurricane force wind speeds, Health Department's Special Needs groups, American Red Cross requirements, certifications and training, availability of faith based groups There is discussion of utilizing the planned Jay High School as a shelter. The school district expects to erect the new building as an alternate shelter.

B. Baker mentioned the liability of opening a risk shelter and without certification there is potential liability.

There are three (3) general shelters and a special needs shelter available and currently no plans to open a shelter in the north area of the county. The shelters include: Sims Middle School, Milton Community Center, S.S. Dixon and Avalon Middle School... The Bennett Russell Elementary School was built with the intention of it being available as a shelter, just as they also plan for the new Jay High School.

There are no plans to open a shelter in the south end of the county.

State guidelines indicate that any new schools will include some specifications for sheltering.

Some post-events will be sponsored by churches in the area.

R. Collins, Pace, FL

Mr. Collins stated that there are pre-hurricane events and planning for shelters needed for Residents of Gulf Breeze or Navarre should be able to go to public facilities in the north end of the county. The interstate rest areas were full for up to a week after some of the hurricanes. We have public facilities, we have deputies and reserve deputies. The old Fidelis sat there un-used and could have been utilized after Ivan and/or Dennis. The building is now owned by the county and not the school system. Some of these places should be made available to the public.

W. Panchenko stated that there are not enough personnel to man all of these facilities.

R. Collins suggested that we investigate whether the buildings and the training must be certified if it is post hurricane.

R. Collins stated that we do have a C.E.R.T. Team in Navarre. There is no C.E.R.T. Team in the north end of the county. He stated that it might be possible to have these Teams man the facilities.

B. Baker stated that he has instructed more than 50 people in the north end of the county and challenged them to build a team such as that in the south end. No one as taken the challenge and organized a team to date. R. Collins questioned whether it was on the web page. B. Baker said that it is on the web page and we do encourage everyone to participate and prepare themselves.

R. Collins stated that we may need to contact the Veteran's Affairs and see if there might be a retired or reserve military person who might organize a C.E.R.T. Team.....possibly R.S.V.P.????

They are all familiar with team efforts.

B. Baker addressed the post event shelters question and stated that the EM division is investigating the topic. There are many plans being undertaken by the Emergency Management division. He stated that the public needs to realize that some decisions are made post-hurricane based on the amount of damage in which area, etc.

The county encourages citizens to evacuate to family and friends. The shelters are for those people who have no where to go to get away from the water.

Public Forum

None

B. Baker stated that the transition from Rural Metro to LifeGuard Ambulance Services will take place at 10:00 P.M. on July 31, 2007

No further discussion and meeting adjourned at 3:30 PM.

Next meeting date and time will be: Wednesday, August 15, at 2:00 PM

