



Manchester Township

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Office of The Mayor

Kenneth T. Palmer
Mayor

Press Release

From the Desk of Mayor Kenneth T. Palmer

April 12, 2019

EXPANDING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

For the past 45 years or so, Manchester Township has been blessed with having devoted volunteers who have served and operated both the Whiting First Aid and Manchester First Aid Squads. Each year, no matter the weather, circumstance or event, these volunteers have diligently provided free emergency medical services to our residents whenever possible. While our volunteer EMS personnel have always provided a valuable service to our residents, volunteerism has and continues to decline while calls for service continue to increase. The growth of our town coupled with an overall decline in volunteerism has hampered each squad's ability to provide emergency medical services. As such, the vast majority of first aid calls are answered by a private vendor, who not only charges the patient's insurance carrier for services, but also bills the patient directly for any charges not covered or paid by insurance. This practice is known as "balance-billing". Under the practice of "balance-billing", patients are personally responsible for any charges above-and-beyond those covered by their insurance carrier.

In 1974, when Whiting First Aid began operations, Manchester Township had approximately 9,000 residents. Currently, Manchester Township has over 45,000 residents and we average approximately 900 first aid calls per month. In 2018, out of the nearly 10,500 first aid calls, our volunteers were only able to service approximately 25% of the calls. The other 75% were handled by Quality Medical Transport, the previously mentioned private, for-profit paid ambulance service with whom the township has no direct supervision. To date, approximately 50% of all first aid calls within the township have a response time of over 10 minutes. Additionally, in 2018, over 250 calls had a response time in excess of 30 minutes.

Based on these facts, I, along Chief Lisa Parker, who also oversees the volunteer emergency services within the township, and the Town Council have decided to implement a township administered Emergency Medical Services Division within the Department of Public Safety. In doing so, we intend to hire approximately 24 EMT's which are state certified and trained to operate four to five ambulances. The EMTs and ambulances will serve the residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, something that our volunteer squads are unable to do. Certainly, there may be times when we need some additional help. To address those needs, we will either enter into mutual aid agreements with our neighboring municipalities and/or contract with private services. The goal is to deliver the most efficient means of providing you with emergency medical services. We are looking to implement the township EMS shortly after the turn of the year.

To pay for the service, we intend to focus our efforts on billing the insurance companies for payment at those established reimbursement rates outlined by law without engaging in the practice of “balance-billing” our residents. Given the number of calls, we feel that the revenue generated will cover the added expenses to the township. Please note, we are certainly not reinventing the wheel with this endeavor. All of our larger neighbors, Toms River, Berkeley, Lakewood, and Brick have implemented similar services and each basically pays for itself.

As mentioned above, we have been blessed with wonderful volunteers over the years. Their incredible dedication to the township is certainly appreciated and we hope will continue. Going forward, the township EMS Division will provide opportunities for volunteers who wish to help. As Mayor, my statutory duty to the township is to recommend plans that will improve the welfare of our residents. As such, I wholeheartedly recommend this plan.