



North Dakota EMS Association Position Paper

Written Call Schedule Requirement

Introduction

North Dakota ambulance services are required to maintain a written call schedule for each day to indicate the qualified responders who are “on duty” for that day. In the past, services handled receiving a call in a variety of ways. This included sounding the civil defense or “tornado” sirens, using a phone calling tree, or ringing a fire bell. With those methods, and even with the advent of modern equipment like pagers, when the alarm was raised, every member of the service who could would respond. Once at the ambulance garage, they would decide who, if not all of them, would take the call. This has led to issues where everyone assumed someone else was responding and thus, no one did. The reaction from dispatch centers is to then sound the alarm again, which leads to delayed response times. Anecdotally, we hear that the requirement for a written call schedule has led to some qualified emergency responders quitting due to the commitment this requires.

Background

North Dakota Administrative Code 33-11-01.2-09 requires ambulance services to “maintain a file that identifies at least two qualified ambulance service personnel on a written call schedule.” This rule was established in 2008 to address the issue of ambulance services not responding to calls and no one being accountable for that response.

Discussion

The rule requires “at least two” qualified individuals be on the schedule at any given time. If more than the required number wish to commit to responding or to just respond to the ambulance when the call comes in, that is allowed within the rule. However, those service members who have been listed as “on duty” for that day would have a legal duty to act and would be held accountable if a call for service went unanswered.

Ambulance services have a duty to act when summoned for an emergency. When service leaders (whether managers, supervisors or boards of directors) do not clearly indicate who is responsible to respond to calls, they keep that accountability (and legal liability) to themselves while not assuring the community they serve that someone will respond.

Summary

The North Dakota EMS Association does not support the elimination of the requirement for a written call schedule.

Ambulance services have a duty to act when summoned for an emergency response. When there are not clear answers to the questions posed above, it is impossible to have accountability to ensure the ambulance service does, in fact, respond to their duty.

We support a strong EMS system in North Dakota – which requires a proactive approach to ensure reliable response to the citizens and visitors of North Dakota.