

February 29, 2024

Morrow County Commissioners
110 N. Court St.
Heppner, OR 97836

Morrow County Health District wishes to formally communicate the enclosed information to the Board of Commissioners. Please include this letter in the next BOC packet either as an agenda item or as correspondence.

1. After consulting with legal counsel, MCHD has determined that we can provide the following backup emergency medical services countywide after March 12, 2024 when MCHD ceases to be the ambulance service provider for Morrow County:
 - a. MCHD's Quick Response Teams, located in each community, may respond as needed to medical calls to provide stabilizing care.
 - b. MCHD may transport patients by ambulance if appropriately dispatched and if a delay in transport would place the patient at risk of harm or death, based upon the professional judgement of the care provider on scene. The same holds true if assistance is requested by officials at the scene of an accident (motor vehicle or otherwise).

After March 12, 2024, MCHD will only have one full-time EMT or paramedic on staff at a time. This person will primarily perform patient care duties in the hospital, but will be available to complete patient transports from Pioneer Memorial Hospital and may be available to respond to emergency medical calls in South County. MCHD will not have staff or sufficient resources to respond to all medical calls and our assistance should be requested only when the County's selected ambulance service provider is unable to respond timely.

2. MCHD strongly encourages Morrow County to require their selected ambulance service provider to engage in a reciprocal agreement with the Tri-County Ambulance Association. Membership covers payment of any balance owed after insurance coverage for medically necessary ambulance service. The cost for a family membership is \$45 per year. In addition to coverage in Morrow, Gilliam, and Wheeler counties, members receive benefits in over 50 other service areas.
3. Based on comments made in Boardman Fire Rescue District's last board meeting, MCHD has concerns about whether BFRD will transport to the nearest appropriate facility when transporting patients in South County. BFRD has not made any effort to determine the capabilities of Pioneer Memorial Hospital and is not familiar with the services that we provide. A failure to transfer patients to the closest, appropriate care facility would place lives at risk and violate the appropriate standard of care. It would also create serious liability concerns for the County, as you are ultimately responsible for the service. For these reasons, we ask the County to require that BFRD become familiar with the services available at PMH and that the County closely oversight whether BFRD is transporting to the most appropriate facility. MCHD is particularly concerned about strokes, when time lost is brain lost. MCHD provides stroke care via a tele-stroke agreement with OHSU and can administer critical medications to reduce the impact of strokes. These medications must be administered within a critical time window, which boils down to just minutes in most cases.



4. We want to be very clear that Morrow County Health District intends to submit a proposal for a 5-year service agreement to provide ambulance service to all of Morrow County as soon as the County releases their request for proposals for a permanent ambulance service provider. In the interim, we have grave concerns about the changes the County is implementing currently, and MCHD is unwilling to stand by without offering our available resources to the community we serve, especially when patients need us most.

Emily Roberts
Chief Executive Officer
Morrow County Health District
541-676-2915