

**February 14, 2024**

## **Ambulance Service Update**

This update follows two meetings between the Morrow County Health District Board and the Morrow County Board during which the two parties agreed to come together to discuss a path forward for the ambulance service.

Unfortunately, the two parties could not agree on an immediate path forward. Meetings between the two parties will resume when the Oregon Health Authority approves the Ambulance Service Area Plan.

MCHD is publishing this update to explain our stance on some of the important topics that have been stumbling blocks between the two parties.

### **Why won't Morrow County Health District extend the 90-day notice period?**

MCHD has agreed to an extension of two years. This is considered short-term in this industry due to the significant investment in equipment and staffing required to safely provide ambulance service. MCHD cannot agree to a brief extension period because this does not provide stability to the community or staff. Our EMS personnel have been dealing with uncertainty in their jobs since the 2021 ASA Plan was repealed in April of 2023. Our crews are exceptionally dedicated, but they are also real people that have bills, families, and obligations they need to consider. Many have sought employment elsewhere due to the considerable uncertainty and looming end date. An extension of 90 more days is not enough to ask these employees to put their plans on hold or to recruit new staff.

### **Is there a way for MCHD and Morrow County to immediately resolve the situation?**

Yes. MCHD has proposed a draft ambulance service contract. At any time, Morrow County could engage in negotiations with MCHD and could immediately execute this contract. This does not require a lengthy process of any kind because both entities are public entities and ORS CH190 allows us to execute an intergovernmental agreement for the benefit of the public. Attached is a legal explanation of this process.

### **Why does Morrow County Health District want to be the ambulance service provider for the entire county?**

MCHD provides ambulance services to all of Morrow County in a coordinated manner.

There are two ambulances in Boardman and two in Irrigon. These locations cross cover, meaning that if an ambulance goes out in Boardman, the ambulance in Irrigon is prepared to respond and vice versa. Both stations can mobilize a second crew as needed. There are some circumstances, such as extreme weather, when all four ambulances are in service and Quick Response Teams are mobilized as backup. This works seamlessly because the crews use an app called Active 9-1-1, which allows instant communication with all EMS personnel.

To serve Heppner, Lexington, and Lone, there are two ambulances in Heppner and one in Lone.

Quick Response Teams are formally established in Lone, Lexington, and remote parts of Heppner. Using Active 9-1-1, a total of three ambulances can be mobilized and Quick Response Teams can be mobilized as backup.

The number of transports in Boardman, Irrigon, and Heppner are typically about the same: in FY 2023, Boardman had 336 transports, Irrigon had 323 transports, and Heppner had 293 transports.



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MCHD's response times are better than National averages and are significantly better than the response times required by the local Ambulance Service Area Plan.

We are concerned that splitting up the ambulance service area will result in less coordinated services and increased response times, particularly if a service provider is responsible for staffing both ambulance and fire simultaneously.

**Morrow County Health District is always happy to respond to public inquiries, which can be directed to [community@moco hd.org](mailto:community@moco hd.org).**