

## Getting to know Klickitat County EMS District #1 - 2024 Article 3

Press Release

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In our introductory article that was published in December, we briefly touched upon our EMS operations. An important focus is providing the best EMS coverage possible for our large County with our limited resources. This month, Klickitat County EMS District #1 would like to explain how we manage ambulance coverage for Klickitat county with three and at times four ambulances. We work in a mode of "system status management". What this means is there are always three full time ambulances staffed 24 hours a day. When we are able to staff our fourth ambulance, it is available as an on-call resource. Most often this is utilized when there is an IFT or Inter-Facility Transfer of a patient from one of our two county hospitals to another, higher-level-of-care hospital. This typically, but not always, is a hospital in Portland, the outer Portland area, Yakima or the Tri-Cities area. We have also been asked to transport to Longview, Tualatin, Hillsboro, Newberg, Walla Walla, Spokane and the Seattle area. However, these further destinations are not the norm and it does take an ambulance out of our county for an extended period of time, *if* we are able to fulfill the transfer.

KCEMS attempts to keep our ALS, or Advanced Life Support, ambulances in our county for response to any 911 calls for an ambulance. We do this foremost because people that call 911 are not in a hospital setting and usually need an immediate response for their emergency. We prioritize our on-call staff when available to put the 4th ambulance to work on the transfer, thus keeping the full time ambulances in the county for 911 coverage. If the transfer of a patient is a life or death emergency, we will take the transfer immediately and use our on-call staff to fill in for 911 coverage. If we are unable to staff the fourth ambulance, the remaining two ambulances cover the county until the 3rd ambulance returns for full coverage.

KCEMS1 FUN FACT: A transfer of one patient from the hospital in Goldendale to a hospital in the Portland Metro area or to the Tri-Cities area is typically 5 hours round trip. Poor weather and adverse road conditions may add to this time.

KCEMS1 Monthly SAFETY TIP: During the winter months here in The Gorge, we sometimes have power outages. It is important to be prepared for such an event. Power is not typically out for very long, but at times it can be a while before power is restored. Keep on hand food that does not need to be heated by an electric stove or microwave, and never use a BBQ indoors. Have flashlights easily accessible in the dark. Have drinking water available if you are on a well that requires electricity, and refrain from opening your refrigerator more than necessary. Check on your neighbors and wrap up to stay warm.

KCEMS1 STATISTICS of the MONTH: As of Jan 30th we have had 234 calls for ambulance service. Of those, we were called to provide stand-by for 3 working structure fires; called for 34 IFTs, 18 of the IFTs were to Columbia Gorge area hospitals or patient's homes; 7 were to the Portland area and 9 were outside our normal transfer distance of 125 miles one way. The remaining 197 calls for the month were medical in nature or trauma, such as motor vehicle crashes or falls.