



IREDELL COUNTY
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April 25, 2023

Mr. Wayne Turner
Chairman of the Board
Mount Mourne Fire Department, Inc.
P.O. Box 32
Mount Mourne, NC 28123

Re: Dispatch to Medical Calls

Dear Mr. Turner;

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and concerns regarding the recent dispatch protocol changes. You are correct, over the past several years the southern Iredell County fire departments have been in discussions with various Iredell County agencies regarding the response to medical calls. We have tried various dispatch options and concepts over the years in an attempt to find the most effective and efficient use of valuable first responder resources. In our effort to accommodate the 19 different fire departments, we found ourselves in a difficult, very inconsistent and libelous position from a dispatching perspective. This led to criticism over inconsistent dispatch, the requirement for telecommunicators to have to remember the different dispatch nuisances for each of the 19 different departments and errors due to deviation from the CAD on a regular basis in an attempt to accommodate the wishes and desires of 19 very diverse agencies.

As a result of the concerns being expressed by the various agencies ECOM serves, the Iredell County Board of Commissioners commissioned a study by a third-party consultant to conduct an ECOM Operational Analysis as well as a County-Wide Radio Needs Assessment. Several recommendations came from these two extensive studies, which the County is in the process of implementing. A primary recommendation that was heard repeatedly, was the need to achieve dispatch consistency throughout the County, which would greatly reduce the concerns over inconsistent dispatch and errors. Another recommendation was the need for the Medical Director to review the nature codes and allow fast forwarding of various nature codes that could be deemed necessary from the Medical Director's perspective. In addition, there was a recommendation for the creation of a Fire/Rescue Emergency Response Standards Committee.

Iredell County ECOM, as the primary answering point (PSAP), is governed by and receives a portion of funding per NC General Statute. Part of their requirement is the obligation to follow the prescribed guidelines of EMD, once implemented. As a note, there are 115 PSAPs and 12 secondary PSAPs in the State and 108 are using EMD.

In addition, all first responders in Iredell County operate under the EMS system plan and the Medical Director's License. When determining the appropriate response to medical calls, the only individual that has the power and authority to make that decision is the Medical Director. With the implementation of the various recommendations from the consultant study, which all first responder agencies participated in and provided input, the response to medical calls was to be standardized for consistency, error reduction and reduction of liability for both the responding agencies and the County. As recommended and requested, the Medical Director reviewed all of the nature codes and responses and determined that 7 different nature codes could be fast forwarded. It was already determined that some calls did not deem a response by first responders and the remainder of the volunteer fire departments are already responding accordingly. As a result of the study and the requirement to create a consistent dispatch protocol, we all are having to make changes to ensure compliance, consistency and ensure protection from liability.

The recommendations of the third-party consultant were communicated to the responding agencies and all received copies of both studies. In addition, the most recent changes to the EMS protocols were reviewed and communicated with Fire/Rescue Emergency Response Standards Committee at a few different meetings and was included in the first responder continuing education classes to ensure awareness.

In today's time, volunteerism is at an all-time low and various departments are having difficulty recruiting volunteer firefighters to respond to the calls in their district. Roughly 75% of the calls that volunteer fire departments run are medical in nature and we are hearing from most departments they need additional funding to pay for staff to run the calls in their district. Our attempt is to assist the departments better utilize their assets to ensure they are there for those more emergent calls while achieving dispatch consistency throughout the County.

The new dispatch protocol became effective on March 27th and the sampling of calls was too small to achieve a good picture of the modification's impact so I took the liberty of pulling some historical calls to use as a frame of reference.

From November 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023, which is a five-month time frame or 151 days, Mount Mourne Volunteer Fire Department received 251 medical calls, which is an average of 1.66 medical calls per day or 11.64 calls per week. Of those 251 medical calls, if the new protocol was in place, they would not have been sent to 38 calls, which is .25 calls per day or 1.76 calls per week. As mentioned above, these calls were deemed calls that first responders would not be necessary based on medical review.

It is not our intention to negatively impact the delivery of vital services to the residents of Iredell County. It is our desire to ensure that critical lifesaving first responders are available for those calls where they are needed. As we are all aware, we can only dispatch the call based on the information that is provided to us from the caller. These calls are run through the EMD (Emergency Medical Dispatch) protocol and resources are sent based on the information provided. If, once EMS arrives on the scene they determine, based on their medical expertise, that additional resources are needed, the system allows for calls for assistance, which would entail sending additional resources such as first responders, law enforcement, etc. This is the way the system

should work. Sending appropriate resources and achieving dispatch and response consistency protects all agencies involved and does not over utilize our vital resources.

We appreciate Mount Mourne Volunteer Fire Department's partnership over the years and look forward to many years of working together to best serve the citizens in your district.

Best Regards,



Beth M. Mull
Iredell County Manager

Cc: Blair Richey, EMS Director
Kent Greene, Fire Services/Emergency Management Director
Candy Miller, ECOM Director
Iredell County Board of Commissioners
Mount Mourne Volunteer Fire Department Board
Roger Hoover, Fire Chief