



MOUNT MOURNE FIRE DEPARTMENT

P.O. Box 32
Mount Mourne, NC 28123
(704) 892-1530

May 16, 2023

Iredell County, North Carolina
Beth Mull, County Manager
P.O. Box 788
Statesville, NC 28687

Re: Dispatch to Medical Calls (Response # II)

Ms. Mull,

Thank you for your response on April 25 to the letter we sent you. We have reviewed your answer to make sure that we understand your position. While we appreciate the time it took to research the statistics provided in your response, upon review of the whole letter we do feel that those statistics do not reflect the current environment and do not consider the nature of the calls. The current protocols are putting our citizens at risk, and we feel that these must be reversed.

In your letter, you showed a reduced response of 38 calls for a short timeframe of last year. To us, your statistics showed that 38 people would have needed help, and they would not have gotten it from us during this timeframe. We were able to pull information from the current period of April 10th through roughly May 1st, and we calculated that a minimum of 26 people did not receive a response from this department during that time. Given that 26 people were not served during a period of roughly three weeks, your statistics do not paint a true picture of what is truly occurring now.

Additionally, your statistics failed to provide details regarding the nature of each call. It is important to not only consider how many people needed help, but also the type of help they require. It is important to share with you some facts regarding the services needed during the calls:

- One was a traffic accident at Mecklenburg Highway and Langtree Road, the intersection in front of our fire station. EMS was dispatched to emergency traffic for a patient with a head injury. This was a car accident with a head injury and the fire department located at the scene was not dispatched. Luckily, my firefighters have enough sense to go and help when needed, so they self-dispatched, which put this fire department and my firefighters at risk because our insurance company had said not to do it.
- One was an unconscious patient on Ashford Hollow Lane. The CAD notes state that the "patient was so dizzy she fell onto the floor."
- One was a fall with injury on Ponderosa Circle, and the CAD notes stated, "husband fell off a ladder onto a step."
- One patient fell onto the bathroom floor and could not get up. Our fire department is located only 3.5 miles from this location. The EMS base is 6.5 miles from this address, which produced more than a 20-minute response time for EMS. An elderly citizen should not have to be on the floor for this amount of time.



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- One was a seizure on Mackwood Road, and the CAD notes stated, "15-year-old brother possibly having another seizure."
- While on the scene of a medical call on Steam Engine Drive, a neighbor came and spoke to my firefighters. She said she called 911 earlier in the day due to her mother falling in the parking lot. She was stuck between the curb and the vehicle and could not get up. She told my firefighters that it took over 25 minutes for EMS to get to her. She did not understand why WE did not respond and help her mother off the ground, but don't worry; we quickly explained the new protocols to her, and you should have seen her face. Remember, this was a taxpayer and voter! With her mother making it, four (mother, husband, daughter, and her husband) voting citizens want the old system back.

In your letter, you also addressed that a consultant hired by the county told you to make the protocol changes. Would the consultant change their minds if it were their mother with a head injury, their mother lying on the ground in the hot summer temperatures, or in the rain wedged between a car and a curb for over 25 minutes? I sure hope so, or please don't ever allow that consultant in the county again because they don't care about people; they care about making money, cuts that don't save money, or just live in a world of statistics!

So, let's talk about money. Does running another ten or twenty calls per month raise our costs? The answer is yes, but minimally. Our firefighters are working anyway, so it does not cost more to have them respond to help our people. When we sell our older fire trucks, they have less than 50,000 miles on them, which means the preventive maintenance cost is the same. The only cost that increases is the fuel we use going to and from the call. When our larger fire trucks get six to eight miles per gallon, that means spending \$3.00 to \$6.00 to respond to get the older lady off the hot ground or \$5.25 to help the unconscious person on Ashford Hollow Ln. So, for less than a cup of coffee, we can help people in their worst times. You noted that fire departments have asked for more funding over responding, but I assure you one thing, we have not. If you add 20 calls per month, at an average of \$5.00 cost to and from, that is only around a \$1,200.00 increase per year. I believe we can find that, as I believe the young lady would have handed us \$5.00 for getting her mother off the ground.

I also noticed that you stated that you wanted consistency throughout the county. Well, that's not working either. You now have fire departments within this county that refuse to respond to calls for help and sit there in the station. You have others like our fire department that had to self-dispatch to help citizens, which places my firefighters at risk because our insurance may not cover us. In the end, Ms. Mull, I cannot control how other fire chiefs, city managers, or board members respond to help their citizens, but I can ensure that my fire department responds to help our citizens!

The last thing I wanted to address is the dispatch center. You noted that your telecommunicators must remember how to dispatch 19 fire departments. Well, they did a hell of a job for the past five years! I want to point out that you may want to walk over to the communication center and see how dispatch works. When someone calls 911, their address pops up on the screen, and the information on who is to be dispatched is listed there on that same screen. Even if someone calls in on a cell phone, when they give the address, it pops up and tells



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the communicator what fire department to dispatch. I hope you have enough confidence in your own people that they can look at the screen in front of them to see what fire department to dispatch. Now, back in the day, the communicator had to pull up a map and look for the closest fire station, but that system is long gone.

So, in the end, we are self-dispatching, and EMS is calling us for help, so it is not working. We want to help our citizens, so put it back as it was. We are not firefighters and board members from way off, we are citizens of this county, and we live here. Our people are lying on the floor, in the heat, in the rain, and possibly dying because of why? A \$5.00 cost increase or because you feel that your communications staff cannot read a screen, but again, they have done an excellent job for the past five years. We are not asking for money; we are asking to help our people!

I am sorry it has come to this, and since our fire department was established in 1955, it has never felt so strongly about an issue. Since 1955, we have always worked with the county administration to come to a consensus, but we cannot handle anything less than responding to help our citizens this time, so, if the county refuses to put it back so that we can help our people, we will get involved in any way possible to make this right. Our board encompasses very influential people, and we are ready to put our money where our mouths are. We are prepared to stand up and bring this issue to our citizens. Think about how many people with stories of their parents laying helpless in a parking lot or on the bathroom floors it will take to make a change, not many.

Our great country is governed by the people, for the people, as we elect citizens to represent our values. Suppose the elected officials in the county don't care about citizens lying on the ground in parking lots. In that case, it is our constitutional DUTY to select different people to represent us. Please understand we are not asking for anything but to allow us to be dispatched to help our people, as we are tired of talking about statistics as we are on the scene and we see people, not numbers!

So, let's cut to the chase, we give the county 30 days to change us back, or we will start a public campaign like this county has never seen before to elect citizens that want to protect its people and provide help to them when they are in their worst times.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne A. Turner".

Wayne Turner
Chairman of the Board
Mount Mourne Fire Department, Inc.

Cc. Rick Howard, Randy Marion, George Moser, Steve Knox, Ben Hess, Benny Clark, and Roger Hoover
Iredell County Board of Commissioners