



MOUNT MOURNE FIRE DEPARTMENT

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

July 11, 2023

To: The Taxpayers Within The Mount Mourne Fire District

From: The Fire Chief & The Chairman of the Board of Directors

RE: HELP - Failure to dispatch Mount Mourne Fire Department to all medical calls within the Mount Mourne Fire District

Dear Fellow Citizen:

Since Mount Mourne Fire Department was founded in 1955, we have always strived to provide transparency to our taxpayers and to provide the highest level of service possible to our citizens. The county has decided to make changes to the dispatch protocol that prevents us from providing the highest level of service possible. We are staffed around the clock with part-time paid members. This allows us to provide very quick and efficient services to our citizens.

Issue: The County has decided to stop dispatching us to all medical calls when you call for our help. These changes were implemented March 27, 2023. We have worked diligently with Iredell County Administration to resolve these issues but have been unsuccessful.

Background: Six years ago, Mount Mourne, along with Lake Norman, Mooresville, Shepherds, and South Iredell Fire Departments, approached Iredell County Administration with concerns we had with medical calls. Our concerns were not being dispatched to some medical calls when we felt we should be. Multiple incidents were documented by each department. After numerous meetings and discussions with the County, each fire department was given two options: be dispatched to only higher priority medical calls or be dispatched to all medical calls. Mount Mourne, Lake Norman, Mooresville, Shepherds, and South Iredell chose to be dispatched to all medical calls. The remaining departments in Iredell County chose to only be dispatched to higher priority calls. This system has been in place for 6 years now and has worked flawlessly, allowing us to always respond to a citizen in need. We were never told this response model would be changed.

Reason for the county's decision: The only reason they have given us for this change is wanting consistency throughout the county. A consulting firm was hired to review and provide recommendations for emergency services communications in Iredell County. One of the recommendations was to form a governance board. Mount Mourne Fire Chief Roger Hoover was selected to be the southern fire department's representative. At the first meeting, an agenda was presented. One of the items on the agenda was medical calls, northern vs. southern. Initially we were told this needed to be voted on. We were then told by County Manager Beth Mull that this would not be voted on and the southern fire departments would no longer be dispatched to every medical call like we had been for the last 6 years. The County Manager did tell everyone that we can still respond to any call, however we would not be dispatched. We could monitor the radio and self-dispatch ourselves to any call we felt needed our services. This is not a feasible option and creates liability for the fire department because we would not have liability coverage unless dispatched by the county.



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Impact on citizens since County's decision to stop dispatching us to all medical calls: Below are some of the impacts citizens will experience.

- You will not receive a response from the fire department on some medical incidents. For example, if you call 911 and advise them you have fallen, are not injured, and only need assistance off the floor, we will not be dispatched under the new response model. You will be required to wait for an Iredell County ambulance to come assist you.
- You may not receive a service you are paying taxes for. The EMS system in Iredell County is very busy. There are more fire departments than ambulances. The majority of the time we can arrive before an ambulance and provide care for a patient in need.
- Over the past 6 years we have documented numerous incidents where we have been able to arrive and assist a patient and cancel the ambulance. This allows the ambulance to remain available for higher priority incidents. We have also documented multiple incidents where we arrived and found a higher priority patient that required upgrading the ambulance to emergency traffic.
- Iredell County Administration informed us they want patient care to be provided within 8 minutes and 59 seconds. The ambulance that services Mount Mourne's district is located in downtown Mooresville on East Center Avenue. Google Maps shows a travel time of 13 minutes from the Mooresville EMS base to Mount Mourne's fire station. Can you imagine the response time to the end of Langtree Road? Mount Mourne can be on scene in the majority of our fire district within 5 minutes. We have pulled data from several medical calls where we were not dispatched, just an Iredell County ambulance. These include the following.
 - June 27, Elizabeth Brook Drive 0829-0847. 18-minute response time
 - June 28, 3100 S I-77, 1430-1444. 14-minute response time
 - June 28, Presbyterian Road, 1520-1532. 12-minute response time
 - June 28, West Paces Road, 1827-1844. 17-minute response time
 - June 28, East Waterlynn Road, 1909-1920. 11-minute response time

These are only a few examples of calls where we were not dispatched. As you can see, each of these exceeds 8 minutes and 59 seconds. We believe we are not being dispatched to about 30% of the medical calls that we were once being dispatched. We are aware that we may be dispatched to some lower priority calls under the old system. However, we cannot justify decreasing the level of service we have provided for the last 6 years. We have never been in the business of reducing our services.

To make sure you understand how we work: We are a nonprofit fire department that contracts with Iredell County to provide fire, rescue, and medical services to you, the citizens that live within our fire district. Our fire department answers to a Board of Directors, who are people of the district that oversee the services we provide. We provide services to the citizens in accordance with our county contract. This system is the best for controlling government employees and elected officials. If our fire department were government-controlled, you may have never heard anything about this issue, as we would not have been allowed to notify you of this crazy matter of not allowing us to help you.



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HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Who to Call & Email:

Commissioner Bert Connolly: 704-902-2647 / bert.connolly@co.iredell.co.nc.us
Commissioner Gene Houpe: 704-902-0255 / gene.houpe@co.iredell.nc.us
Commissioner Melissa Neader: 704-450-0672 / melissa.neader@co.iredell.nc.us
Commissioner Brad Stroud: 704-437-0808 / brad.stroud@co.iredell.nc.us
Commissioner Scottie Brown: 704-437-8382 / scottie.brown@co.iredell.nc.us
County Manager Beth Mull: 704-878-3050 / beth.mull@co.iredell.nc.us
Medical Director Jason Stopyra: 704-878-3025 / jason.stopyra@co.iredell.nc.us
EMS Director Blair Richey: 704-878-3025 / audrey.richey@co.iredell.nc.us
ECOM Director Candy Miller: 704-832-2183 / candy.miller@co.iredell.nc.us

What to say:

- I am a citizen of Mount Mourne Fire District, and I'm requesting that you return to the old system of dispatching Mount Mourne Fire Department to all medical calls in my district.
- Your new system is causing a reduction of services to the citizens of my community, with unacceptable results.

Why does it matter if I Call & Email:

- If a majority of our citizens contact the County Administration, we believe they will revert back to dispatching us to all medical calls and allowing us to provide the highest level of service, just as we have done for the last 6 years.

Closing thoughts:

As a nonprofit, per the nonprofit laws, we cannot do much more than notify you, our citizens, of this matter and ask that, as a citizen of Iredell County, you get involved to convince our government officials to allow us to help you and your family in your times of need.

We view it like this, if you get involved and request that they change back to the old system, you get a highly trained staff in your time of need, but if you don't get involved and the County keeps the system the same, you and your family could need our help, and we will not be authorized to come.

We have included the correspondence we have had with the county. This includes the two letters we sent and the letter we received back from them.

Those responsible for this change are stating that consistency throughout the County is more important than responding to your medical needs. Under no circumstances can this position by the County be justified.



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There is no justification to require a reduction in services to match that of those who are not providing full service, all for the sake of consistency. Fixing the part that is not broken is never the solution.

Respectfully,

Wayne Turner
Chairman of the Board
Mount Mourne Fire Department

Roger Hoover
Fire Chief
Mount Mourne Fire Department
rhoover@mmyfd.com