

From the Office of the Sheriff:           “Value your Volunteers”

Do you realize the value of the first responder volunteers in your community? Should you have a medical emergency, more than likely the response will be handled by an all-volunteer team manning an EMS or first responder unit. Dodge County has the following medical response units - two paramedic services (Beaver Dam & Watertown), ten emergency medical service (EMS) units (Allenton, Randolph, Fox Lake, Theresa, Mayville, Horicon, Hartford, Lebanon, Waterloo, Juneau), and twelve first responder units (Burnett, Woodland, Iron Ridge, Ashippun, Clyman, Kekoskee, Hustisford, Neosho, Reeseville, Lowell, Brownsville, Lomira).

Twenty-three of these units are staffed 100% by volunteers, with Beaver Dam being the only in-county medical services unit which is staffed by full-time personnel. Last year this group responded to 7,646 calls for service. Calls range from non-emergency transports to traffic fatalities. Whether it is a sprained ankle at soccer or a suicide, these volunteers drop everything they're doing at home or work and respond to aid those in need. It is difficult to identify how many lives are saved each year by these units, but I can safely say hundreds.

With the advent of AEDs and other life-saving technologies it is very important to render medical assistance as soon as possible. These volunteers complete the loop that begins with the initial 911 call. As one dispatcher is obtaining necessary information, another is sending law enforcement and paging the appropriate first responder unit or EMS. Normally, a community that does not have an EMS unit sponsors a first responder unit. The first responders respond and render immediate assistance until the EMS unit arrives to conduct the transport. For cardiac and other very serious medical calls, EMS can rely upon either of the paramedic units to reach out and conduct a roadside “paramedic intercept” as they have even a higher level of care capability.

I am writing about this group of dedicated public servants to bring awareness to what they do and how dedicated one has to be to commit to being a member of a first responder or EMS unit. When the pager goes off day or night, it not only impacts the responder but the entire family. When the pager summons you at 2:00 A.M., you cannot just roll over and go back to sleep hoping somebody else will handle the crisis. You are being paged because someone is hurt or dying and you are their lifeline. You are the person they count on to respond, provide them immediate critical care, comfort their family, and ensure swift and safe transport to the emergency room.

These volunteers are not in it for the fame and the glory and there is little monetary reward for this endless commitment. These men and women do it as a passion to help others in need and like we often say, “If not me, who?” These units are either coordinated or hosted through your local fire departments. Many wear two hats, fire/first responder/EMS. Today more than ever, we rely upon volunteers to provide a very valuable service to our communities. Often the ranks are few, requiring others to do more than they wish, but they do it because it needs to be done. We know in Dodge County those pagers blared over 7,000 times and conservatively required a minimum of three volunteers to respond to each call. Please realize the value of your volunteers. Someday it may be you who lay in wait, waiting for a volunteer to respond and save your life. Thanks for listening [tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us).