



**TOWN OF BOXFORD**  
**EMERGENCY RESPONSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**REPORT TO SELECT BOARD**  
**FEBRUARY 14, 2024**

The Emergency Response Advisory Committee was created and received its charge from the Select Board on November 6, 2023. Approved minutes are attached for meetings held on:

- December 12, 2023
- January 16, 2024
- January 31, 2024

At its meeting on February 13, 2024, the Committee discussed and voted in agreement on its assessment of the Town's current three-tiered emergency response program described below:

- Resident call with medical emergency to 911 is received by Communications
- Dispatch operator ascertains name, address, nature of medical emergency and may provide basic care instructions via Emergency Medical Dispatch System
- Radio call transmitted simultaneously to Fire and Police (Tiers 1 & 2)
- After initial Radio call to Fire and Police, phone call is made to Ambulance (Tier 3)

The Town is contracted with Cataldo Atlantic Ambulance (East) and Pridestar Trinity (West). In the event that a vehicle is unavailable to immediately respond to a medical emergency, the contracted ambulance provider has the responsibility to request another nearby private ambulance or send out a mutual aid call to the nearest community with a town-operated ambulance service such as Georgetown, Topsfield, Middleton or North Andover.

**Current Public Safety Staffing Levels:**

- **Communications:** Director, 4 full-time and 7 part-time
- **Police:** Chief, 12 full-time and 11 part-time
- **Fire:** Chief, 4 full time and 35 on-call

**Emergency Vehicles for Tiers 1 & 2--Response NOT Transport:**

- **Police:** (2) cruisers (at a minimum) carrying basic emergency medical supplies and equipment, including defibrillators, are in service at all times

- **Fire:** (2) rescue vehicles, (2) squad trucks, a brush truck, all (5) fire engines, Chief's vehicle and personal vehicles of the East Station Captain and Deputy Chief carry basic emergency medical equipment and supplies, including defibrillators

The Committee agreed to collect, review and analyze emergency response data (Item #5 in the ERAC Charge) for the years 2022-2024 for use in calculating the town's average medical aid response time. The initial data source was the report generated by the Communications Department PAMET Records Management System as modified by a customized report of the Fire Department that contains additional pertinent information. In addition, medical response data was received from Cataldo Atlantic and Pridestar Trinity for the 2023 calendar year. The towns of Topsfield, North Andover, Georgetown and Middleton provided records of their mutual aid ambulance responses in Boxford for 2023. The output from the various systems were incompatible for an electronic data merge, so it became necessary to do so manually in a labor-intensive manner. Committee member Mira Clark volunteered to consolidate the data from the enumerated sources. A sample report for the months of October through December, 2023 is attached.

The committee encountered issues with data collection almost immediately. Ambulance call times were occasionally not documented due to various dispatch constraints and needed to be considered and verified as possible "outliers". The PAMET system categorized medical emergency response calls as:

- Medical
- Motor Vehicle Accident with Injury
- Motor Vehicle Accident without Injury
- Welfare Check

A manual review of actual recordings provided the chief medical complaint reported by the caller to the 911 dispatch operator.

The ambulance companies provided more specific initial medical impressions such as:

- Trauma
- Cardiac – Chest Pain
- Respiratory Distress
- Altered Mental State
- Allergic Reaction

The committee reached a consensus regarding the priority of evaluating in greater depth those serious emergency medical calls (with hospital transport) with response times initially reported to be in excess of 20 minutes from time of 911 call to ambulance arrival. Of concern were notations of delayed ambulance dispatch and arrival, patient refusal of transport, non-specific patient care and various special circumstances. Public Safety Department Heads successfully argued that the recordings of the most serious calls would need to be reviewed to determine if an ambulance was originating at a greater distance than typical, if a downgrade of the emergency was communicated or if unfavorable weather or road conditions were a factor in arrival time.

The Police and Fire Chiefs met with the Director of Communications who is the only employee with the authority to access emergency call recordings. The significant amount of time dedicated to listen to and review calls to determine the reason for delay in ambulance arrival was cause for the committee to reconsider its initial goal of gathering and analyzing three (3) years of solid ambulance response time data. The majority of members were in agreement that efforts to reconstruct detailed and comprehensive **historical** emergency response time data would be reconsidered to focus solely on a three (3) month period, October – December, 2023.

At the suggestion of the Police and Fire Chiefs and Communications Director, the committee will redirect its scope to review **present and future** emergency medical response. The proposal is for the three (3) Public Safety Department Heads to meet **monthly** in 2024 to review the prior-month emergency medical calls to be certain that there are no gaps in data collection and that any delays in response are validated and explained in detail. This meeting will also provide a team forum to make or propose changes in response policies to correct deficiencies and/or increase the town's three-tiered emergency medical response. The prepared data sheets will be reviewed for missing and inaccurate information and will be updated accordingly. The final product will be very accurate emergency response data for a one-year time period that, taken in conjunction with data from the last quarter of 2023, will be a reliable basis for analysis by the Committee in early 2025. The conclusions drawn from that evaluation process will provide evidence for any recommendations to the Select Board.

Note should be taken of existing facts, actions taken and current opportunities that may have a positive impact on emergency response times:

- To date, the Town has received no formal report of death or increased negative medical outcome for a patient who received care or was transported by the existing three-tiered emergency medical response team
- Town residents with concerns about emergency medical response should be directed to the recording of the Public Safety Information Session Presentation on 10/25/23 available on the town's website. They are also encouraged to arrange a meeting with the Fire Chief.
- Middleton and Topsfield Ambulance now respond as the 3<sup>rd</sup> tier to all emergency medical calls at Masconomet Regional High School
- The Communications PAMET system is being replaced by ProPhoenix in April, 2024. It is anticipated that the ProPhoenix Management System will provide customized, comprehensive reporting of emergency response times
- Emergency Response Advisory Committee will meet quarterly to review reporting results from monthly Public Safety meetings and recommend changes if required. One of these meetings will include a Public Forum.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ellen S. Guerin, ERAC Chair