

Buffalo Crews Run Out of Ambulances to Cover Emergencies - New York

It was a tense night for rescue crews in Buffalo who ran out of ambulances to cover emergencies.

Rural Metro ambulance and Buffalo Fire officials all admit it's frustrating when crews are tied up on calls, and other emergencies break.

Monday night, Buffalo got a taste of what can happen when the system is stretched to its limit.

Just before 5:30 Monday night, two emergencies broke at the same time, downtown.

A woman needed medical attention in her Potomac Avenue home.

Meanwhile, a pedestrian had been struck by a vehicle at the intersection of Delaware and Lancaster.

In both cases, 9-1-1 was called, and in both cases emergency responders had to wait for ambulances; 19 minutes at Delaware and Lancaster, and close to a half-hour for the woman on Potomac.

The problem - ambulances simply were not available; they were busy on other calls at area hospitals.

Emergency officials say the whole system needs to be re-examined. Officials say calling 9-1-1 for real emergencies can go a long way to help the system.

Central Referral services and the local United Way are working to develop a 2-1-1 phone hotline for calls that shouldn't go to 9-1-1.

But that isn't expected to be operational until next year at the earliest.