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Chenango scrambles to fill ambulance void

By [Jim Wright](#)

Press & Sun-Bulletin

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CHENANGO COUNTY -- Emergency medical service leaders in Chenango County are looking to the future for a new and possibly better service to arise out of the ashes of the present service which suffered a crushing blow at 5 a.m. Thursday when Superior Ambulance, a Binghamton-based private service, pulled its last ambulance out of the county.

The county had been aware the end was in sight for several weeks. The company had cut its services by two-thirds in January, citing a lack of profitable business. County statistics showed Superior answered around 2,000 calls a year.

The county is scrambling to make ends meet.

"It's been pretty quiet these first few days," said Fire Coordinator and Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator Matt Beckwith. The first test occurred Friday when accidents in the Sherburne and Smyrna areas sent units into operation, but it was handled successfully, Beckwith said.

The Norwich Fire Department continues handling a large core of the city and surrounding area, utilizing fulltime paid emergency medical technicians and has expanded its service area.

Beckwith is looking at several solutions.

"Some fire departments are seeking to reconstitute emergency squads they once had and had cut back to rescue squads," he said.

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The Town of Greene is expected to start three paid daytime employees in the near future to assist in handling calls three days a week: Monday, Tuesday and Friday.


Cooperstown Medical Transport, a private company, is assisting in the Afton and Bainbridge areas out of its Sidney location. They plan to specifically handle hospital-to-hospital and medical transports. Cooperstown also will be seeking a state required certificate of need to expand its service into Chenango County.

Chenango County will require a municipal Certificate of Need for a proposal to operate two fly cars staffed by three full-time advanced life supported paramedics working 60 hours a week, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, to help outlying volunteer ambulance squads.

The county has not yet approved the operation and funding. Beckwith initially looks at a \$77,000 vehicle start-up cost, plus \$15,000 in other costs. The initial estimates were for an annual cost of \$273,600.

Beckwith is hopeful the fly car concept will be up and running by January 1.

STORYCHAT 

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