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## Eleven sign contracts for Mercy EMS ambulance service

By Paul Mrozek  
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Eleven municipalities have signed contracts with the new Mercy EMS ground ambulance service, vice president and chief financial officer Margaret A. Ferrentino said Friday.

Another 10 local governments have yet to finalize their agreements but most of them are expected to do so in the next week. The three fire protection districts that comprise the county have not yet signed on, she said.

"We will touch base with those in the next couple of days. I think it's just a matter of timing," Ferrentino said.

Officials from Mercy EMS provided an update on its proposed contracts at Thursday evening's meeting of the Genesee County Fire Advisory Board.

Mercy EMS is part of Mercy Flight and will be based at the Genesee County Airport. The new organization sent proposed contracts to 24 entities throughout the county.

Local governments that have approved contracts with Mercy EMS include the towns of Le Roy, Byron, Alexander, Pembroke, Pavilion, Covington,

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Bethany, Alabama and Elba and the villages of Alexander and Oakfield. Covington, in Wyoming County, has a contract because the northern part of the town is in the response area for Mercy EMS.

Agreements yet to be finalized include those from the towns of Batavia, Bergen, Darien, Oakfield and Stafford; the villages of Bergen, Corfu, Elba and Le Roy; the city of Batavia and the fire districts of Pembroke, Le Roy and Pavilion, Ferrentino said.

The boiler plate Mercy EMS contract stipulates that the organization has to hit call-response target times on at least 90 percent of its dispatches. The target time varies from 5 minutes to 15 minutes depending on the geographic area from which the call originates.

On Sept. 1, Mercy EMS will inherit the job that has been done by City of Batavia Ambulance for the past decade. City Council voted to abolish its professional ambulance service as a way to cut costs while the city faced a multi-million-dollar budget deficit.

Ferrentino emphasized there will be no interruption in ambulance availability when the transition takes place. Mercy EMS will handle all calls as if the response-time guarantees were already in place.

"There's the spirit of the law and the letter of the law here," Ferrentino said.

Genesee County Deputy Fire Coordinator Keith Hunt said the changeover "appears to be pretty seamless."

Mercy EMS will respond to medical calls in communities and fire districts that haven't signed service contracts, Ferrentino said.

For example, the city of Batavia most likely will not ink one because it is in the middle of a disagreement with its fire department union, which will see most of its paramedics lose their jobs.

Mercy EMS has already completed orientation for 55 new employees. The new organization will have ambulances based at United Memorial Medical Center and at the County Airport, next to Mercy Flight's helicopter hangar.

Mercy EMS still has to finalize agreements with other organizations such as UMMC and local nursing homes, Ferrentino said.

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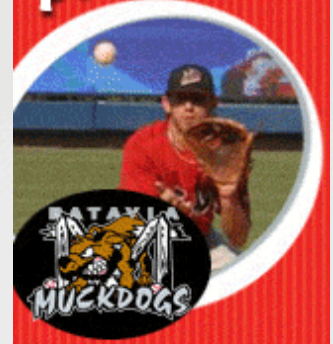
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