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Rochester to Study EMS Services

By: Scott Patterson

The city of Rochester is taking bids for a study that will look into the efficiency of the city's emergency medical response system.

"What we're doing is an analysis of our EMS services," says Rochester Mayor Bob Duffy.

It has been 10 years since Rochester looked at the efficiency of its emergency medical response system. The system relies on the fire department providing basic life support and Rural/Metro Ambulance providing advanced life support and transport.

"Everything's changed dramatically, especially EMS in 10 years," says Rochester Fire Chief John Caufield.

He says city firefighters have seen a 43 to 50 percent increase in EMS runs in the past five years.

"We're running around 45 percent of our total call volume is EMS," says Caufield.

"It's good because the firefighters are able to stabilize a patient, begin taking a history, begin some immediate lifesaving procedures when necessary, and then turn over car to our paramedics," says Rural/Metro Division General Manager Tom Bonfiglio.

He says it is a system that works well, although he has no problem with the study.

"I think it's always healthy for the city to examine all its options, to look at all its systems," says Bonfiglio.

The study will look at four options: keeping the status quo, training firefighters to provide more advanced life support, having Rural/Metro provide all medical services, or having the fire department do the same.

"Many of the largest communities in the country, the fire department provides not only first response, EMS in the fire trucks, but they also run the ambulances," says Caufield.

Both sides agree it would take quite a bit of money to make any significant changes, at a time when money is not easy to come by. Mayor Bob Duffy stresses this is only a study, not a final decision.

"This is to take a big picture look overall at EMS services and make sure what we are doing, what works, and I think this study and the report that comes out of it will help us in future contracts," says Duffy.

The study is expected to be completed by next spring.

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