

# Croton ambulance squad under review, response times lagging

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The village's director of emergency services, Richard Nagle, a former Croton-on-Hudson fire chief with extensive experience in emergency services, has been asked to carry out a study of the village's ambulance procedures, as well as recommendations for improvement.

"The overall objective is to provide help to an EMS system that's having difficulty because of low membership," said Nagle, a volunteer who oversaw emergency services in Ridgefield, Conn., for more than a decade.

Response time has been lagging this year, as dependence on the Ossining Volunteer Ambulance Corps to transport patients to local hospitals has been on the rise.

Peter Tripodi, an Ossining town official and a volunteer firefighter, said changes were imperative. He said he often hears requests for medical assistance from Croton, while listening to his emergency radio, not being answered in a timely manner.

"Time and time again I hear of a stroke, head injury, fall from ladder, and time and time again Croton EMS is 'toned' to their pagers (alerted) 3 times, sometimes in the span of 10 minutes and do not respond, or respond 10 minutes late," Tripodi wrote in an email.

Then it falls to Ossining, typically, to send an ambulance crew.

Capt. Gary Diggs of the Croton EMS could not be reached for comment.

Members of the Ossining ambulance organization met with Croton officials earlier this winter to discuss their concerns, as well as to suggest the hiring of a full-time professional.

Mayor Leo Wiegman said the village administration was attuned to the subject and looking for answers. While some changes to the ambulance squad, such as it leaving the fire department and gaining some new membership, showed improvements a year ago, response times are once again under scrutiny.

"There's a larger pattern we want to address. Response times aren't as good as they were a year ago," Wiegman said

Solutions could include consolidation or hiring paid staff, among other ideas.

Wiegman noted that a Croton police officer, as well as a professional paramedic affiliated with Tri-Community Area Fly Car Service, are often on the scene of a medical emergency within minutes. The ambulance squad then delivers the patient to the hospital.