



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

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Gov. Evers Announces \$30 Million to Support and Stabilize EMS in Rural Communities

MADISON — During his 2022 State of the State address tonight, Gov. Tony Evers announced a plan to support and stabilize Wisconsin’s emergency medical services (EMS) system across the state with a nearly \$30 million investment. The governor’s plan includes efforts to supplement the Funding Assistance Program (FAP), which provides annual grants to all public ambulance service providers, including volunteer fire departments, nonprofits, and counties and municipalities, create a new grant program to help those providers who are not eligible for FAP, and fund a 16 percent reimbursement rate increase for private and municipal ambulance providers for emergency medical transportation.

For a decade, local governments have been asked to do more with less. Since 2011, state aid to communities has gone down even as costs have gone up. Help from the state was cut by more than nine percent while public safety costs have increased more than 16 percent. Between these rising costs and lack of available staffing, some have even gone without ambulance services, left with no other option but to hope and rely upon neighboring providers.

“We’ve expanded access to telehealth services, protected healthcare for Wisconsinites who have pre-existing conditions, and worked to reduce the costs of prescription drug prices,” Gov. Evers said during his address. “But we also know that there is great need for emergency services and responders in our rural communities.

“In Wisconsin, we rely on nearly 800 emergency medical service providers—more than half are either operated exclusively by volunteers or through a combination of volunteers and paid staff. These folks are doing outstanding work, but many have been doing it for years, and it’s sometimes difficult finding new volunteers to step into these important roles.

“No one should be calling for an ambulance and have to wonder whether help will come. So, tonight, I’m announcing we’re investing nearly \$30 million into supporting emergency medical service providers and services across our state.”

Under the governor’s plan, every emergency medical service and emergency medical response provider will qualify for funding. Provided through the state’s federal American Rescue Plan Act funding, \$20 million will go to EMS providers across the state for whatever help they need the most, whether it’s increasing staffing support, more training for first responders, or purchasing an ambulance, medical equipment, or

supplies. Of that \$20 million, \$8 million will go to FAP. This investment will bring the total funding available to those eligible providers to \$10.2 million for fiscal year 2023. The remaining \$12 million of this investment will be provided as one-time, flexible grants, prioritizing small, under-resourced EMS providers who do not qualify for FAP to use for whatever they need, including staffing, equipment, supplies, or other expenses.

Additionally, the Wisconsin Medicaid program reimburses private and municipal ambulance providers for emergency medical transportation, and the governor's 2021-23 biennial budget included a rate increase that went into effect on Jan. 1, 2022. Despite the recent rate increase, Medicaid rates are still below Medicare and commercial rates, contributing to an erosion of EMS provider stability. In light of this, and in addition to the \$20 million investment, Gov. Evers announced a plan to use \$7.4 million all funds to implement an additional 16 percent rate increase for emergency transportation providers.

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