



## *Norton County EMS*

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### **0.25% Sales Tax Increase for EMS**

I'm sure there are numerous questions on the upcoming sales tax increase to support funding for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Norton County.

Norton County is fortunate to have a high-quality EMS service that is staffed 24/7, 365 days a year by well trained technicians. Over the past 6 years our call volume continues to rise to nearly 700 calls per year, with over 200 of those being out of town transfers that require 2 crews being on duty. A well trained, adequately equipped, full-time EMS staff does not come without challenges.

#### **The Funding Challenge**

Emergency Medical Services in Norton County are paid by local taxes and largely by insurance billing and reimbursements either through private insurance, Medicaid or Medicare. The largest of these, reimbursement rates from Medicare, fall below the actual cost of delivering adequate EMS care, and this gap is widening.

Financial challenges we face stem from the high cost of qualified personnel, rising costs of medical supplies, medical equipment purchases and better training equipment. Staffing is our largest expense. Securing, and more importantly, retaining paramedics and AEMTs is extremely challenging with a severe nationwide shortage of both. To retain these qualified and well trained personnel we find ourselves continually increasing salaries and benefits.

With the overwhelming portion of our budget being earmarked for payroll, precious little revenue is left for purchasing or updating medical equipment, securing training equipment and updating our ambulance fleet. Without added funding, some serious compromises will have to be made in the very near future that will negatively impact our high quality EMS coverage in Norton County.

#### **How will these funds be used**

Our goal is always to maintain the highest level of emergent care possible for the citizens of Norton County. Towards that goal, the money would be used to better equip and train the staff. Areas with increased financial need to maintain quality emergency services currently are:

- Improved and/or upgraded medical equipment and supplies
- Improved training equipment (Current training equipment is grossly outdated)
- Support funds to purchase new, or rebuilt, ambulances as the need arises