

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Santa Barbara, CA 93101
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Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 8/29/03
Department Name: Public Health
Department No.: 041
Agenda Date: 9/9/03
Placement: Departmental
Estimate Time: 30 min
Continued Item: YES
If Yes, date from: 8/12/03

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Roger E. Heroux, Director
Public Health Department

STAFF CONTACT: Nancy Lapolla, Director
Emergency Medical Services Agency

SUBJECT: Contract for Ambulance Services

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:
Direct the PHD Director to establish a project team consisting of representatives from Fire, Sheriff, Public Health Emergency Medical System (EMS) Agency, County Counsel and County Administrator to identify and recommend system needs and priorities for the EMS System including ambulance services with the intent of renegotiating the contract with American Medical Response (AMR) for a period of 5 years.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation is primarily aligned with Goal No. 1. An Efficient Government Able to Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community and Goal No. 2. A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

At the direction of your Board, County departments involved (Public Health, Fire, Sheriff, and County Administrator's Office) met to reevaluate the issue of contracting for ambulance services. The current contract with American Medical Response (AMR), expires on December 31, 2004. There was unanimous agreement that initiating a project team of stakeholders to define the County emergency medical services needs and priorities, followed by renegotiation with the current ambulance provider to address these needs and priorities would be most beneficial to the County and its service recipients.

It is anticipated the project team will take approximately 90 days to complete a facilitated system review process and identify areas for improvement to enhance the EMS system. This process would be inclusive involving the EMS stakeholder (hospitals, fires agencies, law enforcement, emergency physicians, nurses, medical society, trauma surgeons, trauma centers, health plans.) The current ambulance provider, American Medical Response (AMR), would then have about 60 days to work with the County to address these needs through a contract extension. In the event negotiations with the current ambulance provider cannot be

resolved within that time frame, staff will return to your Board for authorization to proceed with a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

County Counsel indicated it would be acceptable to extend the current ambulance services contract per California Health & Safety Code, Div 2.5, chapter 4, section 1797.224 added in 1984, by Assembly Bill 3153. This section stipulates that if the County suspends existing ambulance services or at its discretion decides to utilize an RFP process, then an RFP process must always be utilized in the future when the current contract expires or is otherwise terminated.

During the previous Board discussion on the contract, members of the Board asked staff to identify the benefits of not conducting an RFP process for ambulance services. These benefits include:

- ◆ Contractor (AMR) provides quality medical care with strong medical oversight.
- ◆ RFP process is costly and may not yield improvements.
- ◆ If the County gives up its grandfathered exclusive operating area (EOA) status per Health & Safety Code by deciding to use a bid process, the County must bid the contract each time it expires in perpetuity.
- ◆ Long, well-established professional relationships with the current provider who is meeting its performance standards would be disrupted
- ◆ AMR's investment in the community and provision of additional services to the County through its Mental Health Assessment Team (MHAT) program and Wheel Chair transportation contract with Santa Barbara Regional Health Authority would be at risk.

AMR has been apprised of the recommended process and has indicated concurrence (see attached letter). Public Health and Emergency Medical Services Agency feel this is the preferred option, to ensure that the highest level of emergency medical services is available to the communities served. The County Fire Chiefs representing the interests of their respective cities and districts also concur with the proposed process.

Mandates and Service Levels:

The local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Agency is charged with the development, implementation and evaluation of local EMS systems, pursuant to the California Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Chapter 4, Sections 1797.204, 1797.206, 1797.281, 1997.222, and 1797.224. EMS Agencies may develop Exclusive Operating Areas (EOA) and shall contract for the provision of ambulance transportation services.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Approval of this action to establish a project team to identify EMS system needs, priorities, and improvements is not intended to impact the general fund. In the spirit of collaboration, the stakeholder departments and agencies have agreed to devote in-kind staff time to the process and the only identified cost is that of the facilitator, which is estimated at \$ 30,000. Funding for a facilitator will be identified within the existing Emergency Medical Services Adopted FY 03-04 Budget, which can be found on page D-188 of the County's FY 03-04 Operating Plan.

There are no projected facilities impacts to this action.

Concurrence:

County Fire

Sheriff

General Services

County Counsel

C: Michael F. Brown, County Administrator
Stephen Shane Stark, County Counsel
James Anderson, Sheriff
John Scherrei, Fire Chief
John Eaglesham, AMR