Recruiting EMTs getting more difficult

Cooperstown Bureau

New York state's emergency medical technicians have become more educated over the years, according to Lyle Jones Jr., Otsego County's Emergency Services coordinator.

``People have come to expect more when they call 911, and the state has rules to make sure those expectations are met," he said.

A patient in need of emergency care who's thankful just for a quick ride to the hospital ``is in the minority around here these days."

People who volunteer for emergency squads will have to study many hours before they are certified to help others. Periodically, they have to recertify their credentials, going to courses not always held locally, according to Dan Osborn, captain of the Edmeston Emergency Squad.

The time commitment a volunteer must make increases with his or her level of certification. To become a first responder _ someone who can stabilize, but not transport _ a patient, is far easier than becoming a paramedic.

In between, there are emergency medical technicians, advance emergency medical technicians-intermediate, and advanced emergency medical technicians-critical care.

The courses are rigorous, Jones said, and each emergency provider operates under the license of an emergency room physician in the county.

``You can be sure those doctors want to make sure our EMTs know what they're doing," Jones said.

The state Department of Health oversees emergency medical services in New York and sets criteria for volunteers.

Jones said that to become an emergency medical technician, a designation that most nearly equates with what has been called a basic EMT, a volunteer must be ready to study about 140 hours to start and then 60 hours every three years.

The DOH lists the required courses for various EMT classifications online at www.nyhealth.gov/nysdoh/ems/educ.htm.