Perinton, N.Y. — Call it a sign of the times. As of Jan. 1, a ride in a Perinton ambulance will cost you. The Perinton Volunteer Ambulance Corps was among the last local providers not to bill for its services, but no more. Along with more than 20 volunteer agencies in Monroe County, the Perinton agency now bills a patient’s health care provider after treatment.

Spurred by the increasing requirements to be a certified responder and a decline in the number of volunteers over the past decade, the agency was forced to bring its free rides to an end.

If a person can’t afford treatment or an ambulance ride, however, they won’t be turned away, assured Mike Dollard, Perinton Volunteer Ambulance Corps. The agency has always found a way to cover the costs of that treatment, and the agency’s ability to do so hasn’t changed.

“There’s been a big downturn in the capacity to volunteer because people are working and don’t have as much time,” said Tim Czapranski, Monroe County’s administrator of emergency medical services.

Volunteer ambulance corps are struggling to find volunteers to work during regular business hours. Jeff Hammond, director of the Department of Health says there has been a shift in the way volunteers work, as more gravitate toward evening and weekend shifts. Michael Mastrianni, president of the New York State Volunteer Ambulance and Rescue Association, attributes the drop in volunteerism to the struggling economy.

“Years ago, families could survive on one income. Now both parents are working, and high schoolers are looking for the summer,” said Mastrianni, noting the drop in volunteerism has been dramatic over the last decade. “It’s not just across the board,” he said.

Local impact

Perinton has a staff of 90 volunteers, including ambulance dispatchers and 65 Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics. The Turk Hill Road station, where three ambulance units, a two-person crew and one dispatcher are available at all times, is funded by private donations and a contract with the Town of Perinton. In 2010, taxpayers paid 9 cents assessed value special district charge each year. That will drop to 8 cents in 2011, given the billing change.

Now that the ambulance corps is taking in revenue, volunteers will have the option of receiving a per-hour salary, as in Perinton. The payment option serves as an incentive for EMS staff, and also boosts volunteerism by reducing the strain on individual budgets.

The East Rochester Volunteer Ambulance Corps has a staff of 25 volunteers. That group started billing six years ago, with the village board. Emergency responders there also have the option of receiving a salary, as in Perinton. Captain Terry Shane said the payment option serves as an incentive for EMS staff, and also boosts volunteerism by reducing the strain on individual budgets.

http://www.fairport-erpost.com/latestnews/x1799247337/Ambulance-corps-adapt-to-chang...
volunteers, allowing them to take shorter shifts each month.

**Changing times, changing pressures**

An ambulance ride can cost anywhere between $300 and $2,000, depending on a patient’s needs. As the economic mor:

It was difficult for many to start billing, because they felt it went against the very nature of being a volunteer organi:

That need is apparent nationwide. A study by the Government Accountability Office in 2007 showed that Medicare ap:

For many area agencies, including those in Brighton, Greece and Pittsford, charging for immediate treatment and ri:

In Hamlin, a team of 20 volunteers works around the clock to ensure all 911 calls are answered. The agency is still cc:

“The bill is just to keep the doors open,” Cumbie said.

Not all agencies have that option. Ambulances affiliated with volunteer fire departments, such as Sea Breeze and Po:

Commercial agencies are also part of the picture: Rural/Metro and Monroe Ambulance — the two largest commerci:

**Increased requirements**

The ever-changing requirements to be a certified medical responder are another factor in declining volunteerism, sa Peri:

LaShay Harris is a registered paramedic who started working as a volunteer at the Irondequoit Volunteer Ambulance:

“Requirements for paramedics have increased, so it’s basically a full-time job,” said Harris, who now works at the Ir:

Re-certification can be done through a one-semester class followed by a written exam or continued education. This i:

Although specific requirements vary for EMTs and paramedics, many EMTs don’t renew their certifications within t:

**Awareness is key**

Others say the problem may be a lack of awareness among people who don’t know how to help, says Cumbie, directc
at the Hamlin Volunteer Ambulance Corps. While the economy and extensive requirements are valid causes for deci
the real problem is lack of awareness among community members who don’t know how to get involved, he said.

“You don’t have to be an EMT to volunteer,” said Cumbie.

At Hamlin, for example, anyone can apply to receive training to become an ambulance driver and have the cost of th
covered by the state Department of Health.
Undoubtedly, the average workday for anyone working as an EMS responder is strenuous. While many struggle wit
emotional fatigue, Cumbie said the payoff for this line of work is always rewarding.

“It requires someone who can stay calm and focused in the midst of a problem and address it,” said Cumbie. “There
helping someone who needs you at the worst moment in their life.”

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