OEMSCA NEWSLETTER

August 28, 2019, Edition VII

ACEMS personnel on the scene of a crash at OU.

Athens County EMS faces unique challenges in two-college jurisdiction

For Athens County EMS, having two colleges in its jurisdiction brings a youthful, vibrant atmosphere while also presenting unique challenges.

Chief Rick Callebs, who has held his position since April 2012, said the agency had about 10,000 requests for service last year. The department features 71 employees, of which 42 are full-time. This includes 46 paramedics, 23 EMTs an administrative assistant and a physician medical director.

The department has 11 stocked vehicles with either six or seven staffed daily. The agency operates from five different stations across the county in Athens, Coolville, Glouster, Nelsonville and Albany.

Callebs said Athens County is unique for many reasons, but one of the major reasons is because of its geographic location.

“We are situated between the Hocking Hills and the Ohio River and are home to two colleges, Ohio University in Athens and Hocking College in Nelsonville,” he said.

One of the bigger challenges includes covering all OU football and basketball games under an exclusive contract. OU is a Division I school, so he said covering a home football game at Peden Stadium represents a big challenge.

“We deploy multiple walking medic crews, a dedicated ambulance and crew for the football teams, ambulances staged outside the venue for transport and a dedicated supervisor to coordinate the event,” he said.

Callebs said the calendar is also full of spring festivals and outdoor concerts that attract thousands.

Athens also features the international renowned Athens Hallowe’en Block Party that brings about 20,000 people to the area in late October.

“Our agency partners with the Hocking College EMT and Paramedic training programs to provide clinical ride-time experience and we have similar relationships with the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine and the Post-graduate Athletic Training Program,” he said.

“Future physicians ride at our busiest stations alongside the paramedic crews as part of their clinical experience.”

Callebs said Athens County EMS is a busy place to work.

“We average 25-30 calls a day with six trucks,” he said. “We are 9-1-1 only, all advanced life support service, with no long-distance, inter-facility transports. A recent pay raise makes use one of the highest-paid EMS agencies in southeastern Ohio.

Callebs said he values his department’s membership in the Ohio EMS Chiefs Association.

“Third service EMS never had a unified political voice in state government until OEMSCA was formed,” he said. “It’s great to have a seat at the table on EMS subcommittees and the Ohio EMS, Fire and Medical Transportation Board.”

Callebs said OEMSCA offers various networking opportunities.

“If I have a problem, it’s very likely that other EMS chiefs have experienced the same issue and can offer advice and counseling,” he said. “We share policies, goals, ideas, bid specs and other technical and operational data that keeps everyone from reinventing the wheel.”

A lot of friendships have developed through OEMSCA membership, because, at the end of the day, we’re all EMS people who chose this unique career path. That’s common ground for enjoying a cup of coffee or eating breakfast together and just catching up.”

Callebs said EMS billing, recruiting and retaining quality employees and the abuse and misuse of the EMS system are among the key issues Ohio EMS departments are dealing with. He said his future part of the job is helping new employees grow into the job. “I also enjoy working with other agencies on large special events, trying to be at the forefront on the latest developments with new equipment, working on our (soon to be built) new Athens EMS station and central administrations offices and developing five and ten-year goals for our office.”

Callebs said new products and technology are helpful but said some of the best and newest equipment tends to be “horribly expensive.”

“Third-service EMS agencies do not usually qualify for the bulk of the federal grant money that is routinely given to fire departments,” he said. “Budget issues prevent us from jumping on every new thing that comes along.”

Callebs said he is pleased with how things are going, but he said it’s important to continue to improve and to keep long-term goals in mind.

“I would like to get our new Athens EMS station and administrative office complex built and operational. This is a $2.2 million project that includes a larger training room, bus space for eight ambulances, individual bunk rooms for EMS crews and an administrative office area that will consolidate three facilities into one,” he said. “We are hoping to be operational in the summer of 2020.”

Callebs said the department has a strong preventative maintenance program that regularly replaces front-line ambulances.

“This needs to continue,” he said. “We did a fleet-wide Stryker power-load conversion in 2013 and have the power load cots and trolley system along with the Stryker stair chairs. I’d highly recommend that to all departments.”

Callebs also said he hopes to purchase additional equipment and convert the workforce to all full-time.

“We also hope to construct a sixth EMS station east of Athens along US 50,” he said, adding that no timeline has been implemented for the goal.

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Rick Callebs
It has to stop, before there’s no one left to answer the call

Is the Thin White Line cracking? A VA paramedic’s perspective

Scott Grant, a paramedic from the state of Virginia, put together this powerful, yet troubling post on Facebook in April about the future of EMS careers. Imagine if you needed an ambulance and this is all you got. A box on wheels of full equipment and medications to save your life, but no one there to use it. EMS is in trouble, and people don’t seem to notice and/or care.

Every day I sign on to my social media accounts I see new news stories being posted on the EMS pages that I follow about workers leaving the EMS profession in droves. As I read through the comments sections on the stories I tend to see a similar theme: poor wages, poor benefits, ridiculous expectations for hours worked, and management teams that don’t care about their employees.

The national average salary for an EMS provider is $33,000 according to the BLS. $33,000!!!!! The local car wash has a billboard posted advertising $40,000 for management positions! AT THE CAR WASH!!!

They assess patients, make treatment decisions every other month and will attend committee meetings periodically. “I feel I bring 20-plus years of knowledge and experience of being involved in a third-service EMS environment,” he said of his contribution to the board. The EMFTS board is responsible for several things, including the accreditation of EMS training programs, the approval of EMS continuing education sites, the oversight of Ohio’s trauma system, the oversight of the EMS grant program and the licensing of Ohio’s medical transportation services. The board consists of 21 members, 20 appointed by the governor and one appointed by the director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety. The appointees to the board represent Ohio’s fire and emergency medical services, private medical transportation services, mobile intensive care providers, air medical providers, trauma programs, hospitals, emergency physicians, EMS training programs and the Ohio Department of Public Safety.

“Jeff has a thorough understanding of EMS and its needs and he will be an excellent representative for the Ohio EMS Chiefs, and will be an asset to the state EMFTS board.”

Jeff Jackson

DeWine appoints Jeff Jackson to state board

Gov. Mike DeWine announced several appointments Aug. 16, including that of Sandusky County EMS Chief Jeff Jackson to the State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services. Jackson is to be the Ohio EMS Chiefs Association representative on the board.

“I was very honored just to be nominated by OEMSCA,” he said. “To be appointed my Governor DeWine has me speechless.”

Jackson said OEMSCA and its members have worked very hard to get where it is today.

“My goal will be to continue the hard work for the third-service EMS agen- cies in make sure we have a voice at this level,” he said.

Jackson said he will attend board meetings every other month and will attend