

Evans Center Fire Company

[Fire - Rescue – Emergency Medical Services]

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Evans Center Firefighters Upgrade EMS Offering

EVANS CENTER --- Adding to their long history of local fire service “firsts,” the Evans Center Volunteer Fire Company recently upgraded their emergency medical services to the Paramedic level.

“We’re proud to be the first fire department in the Town of Evans to offer Paramedic level service. We join a small group of fire departments in Erie County that provide truly Advanced Life Support services,” said Fire Chief Bruce Green.

Although Evans Center is not the primary emergency transport agency in the town, their members felt strongly that they wanted to provide the same level of advanced care offered by Rural Metro Medical Services, the contracted primary EMS provider in the Town of Evans.

Paramedics can administer medications and other life saving measures that basic and intermediate level EMTs cannot.

One Rural Metro Paramedic Unit is typically stationed in the town at any one time. When needed, a backup unit responds from the Town of Hamburg or elsewhere. Often, simultaneous calls for help go out in Evans Center’s response area where both incidents warrant paramedic level care. Evans Center paramedics can now establish advanced life support care until the backup rig arrives or simply expedite patient transport using Evans Center’s ambulance.

“The entire community we serve deserves this level of patient care. If it was one of our firefighters, or one of your friends or family that was sick or injured and a Rural Metro paramedic unit wasn’t available, we would want them to have the same level of professional care. We would want them to have the same opportunities for survival that a paramedic brings. That’s why we’re doing this,” added EMS Captain Tim Szczepaniak, one of the company’s four paramedics.

The paramedic team is comprised of Doug Milks, an Evans Center veteran of 21 years; Tim Szczepaniak, a 16 year member; and Tom Szczepaniak, an 18 year member and Chief of Safety Operations for the fire department. They will be joined by Paramedic Laura Masullo when she returns from maternity leave later this year.

Obtaining certification as a paramedic unit is not a quick or easy task; it requires more than 3,000 hours of initial training in classroom and clinical settings for each of the paramedics.

But that's just the start. Then there's 40 hours of continuing medical education each quarter and each of them must then re-certify their knowledge and skills every three years for their basic paramedic training. On top of that, individual certifications in pediatric advanced life support; advanced cardiac life support and basic trauma life support must be renewed every two years. All of this is completed while maintaining an active lifestyle that includes full-time jobs, family and all the other responsibilities of being a volunteer firefighter.

It also requires a considerable financial investment to upgrade these services. In addition to the fire company's existing budget for emergency medical services, they purchased medications, cardiac monitoring and other equipment worth more than \$5,000 to support the paramedic program.

The NYS Department of Health EMS Division completes a thorough pre-certification inspection as well as spot inspections. The control of medications, inventorying and additional documentation adds to the commitment our volunteers have already taken on.

The fire department's EMS division has been working up to this point for several years and absorbed these extra costs into their operations without asking for additional tax support from the town. As always, patients will not be charged for this advanced level of care.

"We're proud to be able to offer this level of service and we're very proud of these four paramedics who have made this huge personal investment, stepped up to enhance the care we offer the residents, businesses and travelers throughout our community," Chief Green commented.

This upgrade to paramedic level emergency medical services joins a list of innovations for Evans Center. The fire department was also the first in their community to implement the use of the Jaws-of-Life, Cardiac Monitoring, and a Thermal Imaging Camera. They were the first unit to have a Water/Ice Rescue Team and a Rapid Intervention Team specially trained to rescue trapped or injured firefighters.

They were the first volunteer fire company in Erie County to have its own on-site training facility (The H.O.T. Zone), and the first to promote their web site: www.ecvfc.org on their apparatus.

If you or anyone you know is interested in volunteering, please contact the fire department at 549-1221 or ecvfc@verizon.net or visit their web site: www.ecvfc.org to download a prospective member guide.

The fire department's recruitment message is "Firefighting isn't for everyone, but volunteering can be..." and offers flexible memberships for Fire/Rescue, EMS Only, Fire Police and FireCorps members who perform non-emergency administrative and support functions for this busy emergency services agency.