

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 17, 2022

As part of an on-going effort to sustain the highest quality emergency services to the residents and visitors of Jefferson County, the Jefferson County Commission voted on August 11th to begin the process of integrating the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency as a county department.

This move will unify emergency services with emergency communications (E-911) and the office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management as County departments, while ensuring that compensation, benefits, hours and other working conditions for the JCESA staff are protected.

This decision followed earlier commitments by the Commission to increase coverage from the current level of five professionally staffed ambulances during the day and four in the evening, to six during the day and five during the evening. The Commission has also authorized using Federal ARPA funds to purchase ten ambulances from the volunteer departments. Sales agreements have been finalized with all volunteer departments.

The fire and emergency response capacity in Jefferson County have been built over the past two hundred years by a dedicated group of volunteers who have provided both emergency medical services and fire suppression. As the County has grown and our economy shifted away from locally based jobs, the volunteer model has been pressed to meet the growing demand, particularly for emergency medical services which made up more than 79% of calls in 2020.

The Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency provides professional paid EMS staff to supplement the volunteer force. In FY14, a JCESA provider filled the role of driver and/or primary attendant on 60% of EMS incidents (2,550.) In FY21, a JCESA provider filled the role of driver and/or primary attendant on 96% of EMS incidents (4,379.)

While the Commission's deliberations have been informed by data and information from outside experts, the plan adopted by the Commission was developed by Jefferson County leaders, relying on input from the Chiefs of the seven volunteer fire companies, the leadership of the JCESA, and the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 5351

Over the coming months the Commission, assisted by County Administrator John Nissel, will work with all parties to implement these changes and to develop standard reporting systems and dashboards so that the public can monitor performance.

For further information, please contact John Nissel, County Administrator, Jefferson County Commission - 304-728-3284.

##