



ESSEX RESCUE, INC.

**1 Educational Drive
Essex Junction, VT 05452
Phone (802) 878-4859**

November 2023

It is with immense pride that Essex Rescue provides emergency medical transport services to Essex Junction, Essex Town, Jericho, Underhill, and Westford. During all times of the day and night, and regardless of weather conditions, our providers, ranging from EMT to paramedic, respond quickly to the sick and injured to deliver basic and advanced emergency life support services.

- In 2022, received 3,044 requests for service
- Ambulance requests increased 10.5% since 2021
- Our crews average 8-10 calls per day

Commitment to Service

We remain committed to the high-quality service we have provided for the last 51 years. Our service continues to make changes to meet the needs of the communities we serve while providing patient-centered, pre-hospital emergency care. Although COVID-19 has created a significant strain on our organization, we remain ready to fulfill our duty and serve our communities. We are grateful for all the community support which we have received over the years and especially during the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organizational Challenges

Essex Rescue, like many other EMS agencies, continues to navigate significant staffing shortages, increasing call volume, and limited funding sources. We are working diligently to onboard and train new personnel with the goal of increasing the number of staffed ambulances available to respond to calls. Staffing more ambulances means that the organization must adjust its strict historical practice of depending predominantly on volunteers. The high turnover rates and diminishing volunteer leadership have forced many organizations to consider alternative workforce models, which comes with an additional cost. And while Essex Rescue remains committed to retaining volunteer opportunities for those with interest, the reality of solely relying on them is no longer possible.

Changing Workforce

There is no doubt that the pandemic changed volunteering for many, however, it is not the sole cause of the loss. For years, volunteer interests have been slowly decreasing; the pandemic simply accelerated the loss. EMS is also very different today than it was 10 years ago. EMS provider safety and proficiency relies heavily on regular field practice and experience, which takes intensive training. Due to this, many EMS providers have come to expect compensation for their work. Hard work which is certainly worthy of pay.

Essex Rescue cannot immediately pay all its providers, but we are working towards a model that provides some compensation for the provider's time, much like our fire departments do today. We have learned that not compensating trained and experienced personnel will result in losing them to another organization that will compensate them for their hard work. Emergency medicine is viewed as a profession today; to ensure quality, experienced providers we must welcome this transition while aligning our workforce practices with like services.

Financial Update

We are relieved, yet cautious in expressing that we have seen some improvement in our financial situation. Between internal billing adjustments, this year's patient payor mix, and the generosity of our communities, we were able to move funds into our Capital Reserve account this year. Our Capital Reserve account funds future projects, the upgrading of equipment, and the purchase of new ambulances. Essex Rescue has been unable to appropriately fund this account for the last few years due to the negative financial balance of our annual operating budgets.

Fiscal Year Ending 2023 *	
Expenses	\$ 1,312,600
Revenue	\$ 1,616,532
Capital Reserve	\$ 303,932
<i>*Capital campaign expenses/contributions removed</i>	

It is very difficult to gauge transport reimbursement outcomes year-to-year because there are so many variables that affect it. This year's transport revenue increase had less to do with the number of calls billed and more to do with who the patient's insurance carrier was. We were quite surprised to learn last year's reimbursement total came in above what was anticipated, but there is no telling where it will be at the end of this year. Contrary to popular belief, the increase in revenue is not due to higher call volumes. In fact, Essex Rescue billed sixteen more calls in 2021 than in 2022 and received less insurance reimbursement.

Billing Statistics					
Year	Total Call Volume	Transports	Non-transports	Cancelled / Mutual Aid	Insurance Reimbursement
2020	2,476	1,765	200	711	\$ 874,956
2021	2,754	1,642	112	1,224	\$ 861,519
2022	3,044	1,749	180	1,115	\$ 1,106,554

Essex Rescue is responding to an increased number of non-emergent/non-transport requests than in years past. These services are not without cost to Essex Rescue and only seldomly result in insurance reimbursement. Although Essex Rescue has billed for non-transport services for years now, it has never held the patient responsible for the unpaid balance. In 2022, Essex Rescue wrote off more than \$30,000 in unpaid non-transport expenses. Changes to Vermont EMS Protocols now require every patient to receive a full assessment by a licensed EMS provider, regardless of their complaint and/or desire to be transported. Starting January 1, 2024, Essex Rescue will begin billing for all services it provides regardless of the patient's insurance coverage. This means that all patients will be responsible for paying any non-covered costs associated with services provided by Essex Rescue. Residents are strongly encouraged to consider subscribing to Essex Rescue's annual subscription plan. For \$50 a year, everyone in the household will be protected from any non-covered expenses associated with the need for emergency ambulance services provided by Essex Rescue. Essex Rescue bills the patient's insurance and under the subscription all non-covered expenses are then written off.

Volunteer Service

Essex Rescue is always seeking community volunteer involvement. There are many opportunities within our organization which include both volunteer clinical and non-clinical roles. If you are interested in joining a motivated team, committed to providing high quality pre-hospital emergency medical care, please give us a call or check out our website at www.essexrescue.org to learn more about us.

Capital Campaign and New Building Project

Essex Rescue continues to battle the daily inefficiencies operating out of our current building. With a new ambulance on order and the inability to physically fit the unit inside its building, other building arrangements are critical. We are excited to announce the purchase of a parcel of land in the area of Essex Way through the generosity of the Lang Family. The initial payment for the land was drawn from funds raised through the "Next 50 Years Capital Campaign Drive". Although some money had been raised, the campaign was placed on hold due to the rapid increase in building costs as well as other organizational challenges/priorities. Essex Rescue hopes to reinvestigate this effort soon.

Annual Subscription

Are you enrolled in Essex Rescue's Subscription program? Program subscribers pay an annual \$50 per household subscription fee and pay nothing else out-of-pocket for expenses relating to emergency ambulance service

provided by Essex Rescue. Our subscription mailing is sent out during the month of November. For more information visit our website: www.essexrescue.org. It is important to note that services provided by another ambulance service are not covered under this plan agreement with Essex Rescue. The subscription program benefit only applies to services provided by Essex Rescue.

Lastly, Essex Rescue will always accept donations, large or small, and are grateful for the ongoing generosity demonstrated by the communities we serve.

Thank you,
Colleen M. Ballard, NRP
Executive Director