

## Port paramedics to be on job Aug. 1

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM  
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### State approval paves way for city ambulance crews to start providing advanced emergency service

Paramedics will begin answering ambulance calls in the City of Port Washington on Monday, Aug. 1.

Fire Chief Mark Mitchell said the State of Wisconsin approved the city's request for paramedic status last week, giving the department a year to phase in a full-time program.

"This will be wonderful for the community and the entire area," Mitchell told the Police and Fire Commission Monday night.

The Thiensville paramedic unit — the only other paramedic unit in Ozaukee County — has been "running ragged" answering calls throughout the area, he noted.

Mayor Scott Huebner hailed the news, saying it is good news for residents.

"It will enhance the quality of life here," he said. "This service is very important to give residents faster, more advanced treatment in an emergency. People will get a higher quality medical service that will help save lives. That's really great.

"For a small community like Port Washington to pull this off is terrific."

The news that the department's application has been approved was long-anticipated by the city.

The department began work on its application last spring, and originally hoped to receive approval in time to begin the service in January.

Mitchell said the department has guaranteed the state it will provide paramedic service from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, he said.

"We know we can do more than that," Mitchell said, noting three of the four weekend ambulance crews include a paramedic.

Of the Port ambulance crew's 26 members, four are paramedics. However, they have been unable to use their advanced skills because the department did not have paramedic status with the state.

The department has a list of nine or 10 other paramedics interested in working part time, and will begin interviewing them later this week, Mitchell said.

By the end of the year, he said, he hopes to be providing paramedic service around the clock.

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The department will not immediately provide intercept service, where the paramedics meet other ambulances en route to the hospital to provide advanced care to patients, Mitchell said.

“We will have that in place by Jan. 1,” he said. “Or most likely sooner than that.”

The department already has the equipment and virtually all the drugs needed for the paramedic program, Mitchell said.

An area of the firehouse has been earmarked for use as sleeping and living quarters for the part-time paramedics, Mitchell said, noting that those interested in the job “come from all over the place, from the Green Bay area, Plymouth area, and mostly the suburban Milwaukee area.”

The living quarters will be developed as needed.

The Common Council recently approved a new fee schedule that includes increased charges for the paramedic service, and approved paying paramedics \$5 an hour while on-call and \$20 an hour while they are responding to calls.

The increased fees are expected to cover the cost of the service.

Mitchell credited department members Maribeth Barbuch and Jim Riley with doing much of the work on the application, adding that the department worked with the Thiensville service in creating its plan.

“This will just enhance the level of pre-hospital care a person will get,” Mitchell said.

Both EMTs and paramedics provide significant care for patients, but paramedics are able to conduct more advanced procedures and administer many more medications, including those for pain and cardiac care.-