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Debate Over City-Run Ambulance Continues

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Tri-State Ambulance Director Matt Zavadsky feels that the best thing La Crosse can do with their ambulance service is to just have one system in place to respond to emergencies in the area. "Let's not piece mill the system and carve out little sections here and there and then you lose the clinical proficiencies," says Zavadsky.

The City of La Crosse has discussed a plan that would add two fire department staffed ambulances to the area, and use firefighters that are trained as paramedics to respond to emergency calls. "I do not believe the clinical quality would suffer whatsoever in fact, I think the citizens would see an improvement as far as getting higher level of care," says La Crosse Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief Randy Loken.

Some are concerned that the people are not getting their say in this process, and groups like the Citizens for Responsible Government are collecting signatures to turn down any possible city-run ambulance service. "It's something that should be brought to the people, it's the people's choice and so we're working to give them that opportunity, a democratic system and we're finding very positive support," says Citizens for Responsible Government President Dave Drewes.

Currently, the La Crosse Fire department and Tri-State Ambulance work well together, and fire officials don't see much changing if a city-run ambulance is approved. "We've always worked very close and that would continue, I don't see any change whatsoever on that part I think personally I think the thing could work seamlessly," Assistant Chief Loken added.

Officials from Tri-State Ambulance say that adding more paramedics to the local ambulance system is problematic because it would mean that paramedics won't stay in practice when it comes to treating patients. A recent study on the Milwaukee County EMS System showed that critical care benchmarks were not being met because they have a higher number of paramedics serving the area which may not be needed.

Officials from the Citizens for Responsible Government are trying to collect at least 3,500 signatures to get a referendum on April's Ballot, which would ask residents if they want a city-run ambulance service. They hope to meet their goal by December 1st.



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