



**Pennsylvania Senate Hearing:  
“The Challenges of Firefighting Today”**

*October 25, 2013 – Adams County Emergency Services*

**WellSpan Health’s View of Emergency Response Services**

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**Background**

For more than 30 years, WellSpan York Hospital and WellSpan Gettysburg Hospital have actively participated in the emergency response systems that serve the communities of Adams and York counties. The hospitals have provided ALS services through Medic Units, also known as “chase trucks”. These vehicles *do not transport patients*. Instead, they are dispatched by Adams County or York County 911 for the purpose of transporting *paramedics* trained in providing ALS services to the scenes of accidents or episodes of illness. Once at the scene, these paramedics jump on board an ambulance, which is staffed by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) trained in providing Basic Life Support (BLS) services. If necessary, the paramedic will provide ALS services while on the scene or en route to a hospital emergency department.

For the past five years, WellSpan’s hospitals have also served as a staffing resource to several local ambulance companies by leasing paramedics and EMTs. Each of these local providers hired and managed their own personnel prior to engaging with WellSpan just five years ago.

**Challenges**

From WellSpan’s perspective, the challenges associated with York and Adams counties’ system of emergency response are shared by many regions across the commonwealth. These challenges include:

1. Fragmentation. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, decisions regarding where and how EMS services are provided are made by individual municipalities, of which there are 2,563. Here, resources are allocated in an opportunistic manner, based on what is best for each municipality, not necessarily the county, the region or the commonwealth as a whole.
2. Duplication of efforts and lack of coordination between paramedics, who are transported via “chase trucks” to the scenes of accidents or episodes of illness, and EMTs, who travel to the same scenes via ambulances. These conditions make it very difficult for EMS providers to maintain adequate staffing levels and procure the requisite resources.

**Solution/Recommendation**

Despite the lack of centralization, some Pennsylvania communities have taken the initiative to coordinate ALS and BLS services across municipal boundaries. Lancaster EMS (LEMSA), which was founded in 1993, serves as an excellent example of a community-led system that integrates ALS and BLS services and coordinates the placement of these services in a strategic and efficient manner. The

Community-based MICU has become the preferred model for emergency medical response nationally, and one for which WellSpan advocates for the communities of York and Adams counties.

**What WellSpan Health is prepared to do**

WellSpan will strongly advocate for and support a process through which community providers come together to discuss and plan such a regional solution. We will contribute ideas, energy, funding and our perspective as a health care provider to this process.

WellSpan will strive to provide leadership in the form of a medical director as well as a full-time EMS Coordinator who would interface with local ALS/BLS providers on behalf of WellSpan's hospitals

WellSpan will support local providers with the transition by:

- First, working with organizations to understand their needs
- Providing expertise and start-up resources to those local providers who demonstrate an interest and ability to expand their scope of service. This might include start-up capital funds, equipment and expertise in personnel management, staff recruitment and policy development, to cite a few examples.

It is our belief that enhanced collaboration and coordination among community providers will lead to a much more effective regional EMS program that is led by the community, with WellSpan playing an active role.