

# GRAND ISLE RESCUE, INC.

PO Box 79  
Grand Isle, VT 05458

Serving the communities of Grand Isle & North Hero

South Hero Select Board Meeting  
August 12, 2019

(Edited notes from a briefing to Grand Isle Planning Committee by Ray Mitchell, President, Grand Isle Rescue, July 2019)

## What if YOU called 911 and no one came??

*Amber* It is Vermont state policy (Title 18, Chapter 17) that "all persons who suffer sudden and unexpected illness or injury should have access to the emergency medical services system in order to prevent loss of life or the aggravation of the illness or injury, and to alleviate suffering". The emergency services system enacted by the state has strict requirements for rescue squad equipment and squad licensure, but provides little to no monetary support.

*EMS* Towns provide emergency medical services in a number of ways

1. A "volunteer" licensed ambulance service for their town
  - a. These are paid, part paid, or volunteer services
2. First Response coverage thru their FD licensed for First Response (non Transport) and separate, compensated transport arrangements with a nearby town or an EMS company
3. Compensated EMS ambulance coverage by an EMS company.

Most towns in Vermont utilize paid staff, per diem compensation, or turnkey ambulance service from an EMS business (e.g. AMCARE), at a significantly higher cost.

*Time!* The Golden Hour of EMS

- Survival is often dependent on transport to definitive care (hospital) within the first hour after an acute medical or trauma event
- GIR, an unmanned station, often gets to the scene in 8-15 minutes. Transport to the hospital is 20 -35 minutes. Not much of that hour is left!! How long do you want to wait for an ambulance to come from another town?

*GIR* Grand Isle Rescue (GIR) Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides Emergency Medical Services (EMS) for Grand Isle and North Hero. Grand Isle Rescue is one of the few remaining fully volunteer rescue services in the state. Many towns in the state, region, and nationally are struggling to maintain volunteers for EMS.

*calls* In the 2017/2018 fiscal year, GIR responded to 282 calls in Grand Isle and North Hero (including a few mutual aid calls in S. Hero, Alburgh, and Isle LaMotte). 67% of the calls were in GI, 29% in NH. About 60% required transport to UVM Medical Center.

In the 2018/2019 fiscal year GIR responded to 314 calls and was unable to respond to 3 calls, for a response ratio of ~99%. 23 of those calls GIR responded as primary (ambulance and full crew) into South Hero. GIR also provided certified "jumpers" to crew SH ambulance 13 times. South Hero had 188 calls last year and was unable to provide a sufficient crew for about 40 requests for aid (Milton and Colchester covered a couple of calls), a response ratio of <80%.



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*GIR Business*  
Assets of GIR Inc. include the unmanned station at 4 Faywood Road and two ALS ambulances. We recently replaced an 18 year old ambulance with a 2018 model. Cost of the new ambulance was ~\$189,000, plus over \$50,000 in additional equipment. We depreciate ambulances over 7-years. Ambulances and other capital expenditures are bought using savings accrued from various revenue sources. In 2017/2018 billing provided 56% of revenue, fundraising/grants/memorials 25%, appropriations from Grand Isle 10.5%, and North Hero 7%. \$30,000 of that income was set aside for the new ambulance fund. Grand Isle Rescue Inc. has no debt.

## *FUTURE ?* Ongoing Challenges

- financial challenges
  - o increasing operating expenses (medical equipment and supplies)
    - e.g. lift stretchers, Zoll monitors, nitrous capability for pain management
  - o equipment requirements to meet Vermont EMS protocols
  - o State tax on ambulance revenue
  - o increasing cost of training and training equipment
- operational challenges
  - o too few members, aging and burning out
  - o recruitment and retention of younger volunteer members, many that are working extra jobs to make a living

*THE* Alburgh and South Hero are facing similar or greater challenges, but this also affects GI Rescue!!

- GIR provides back up (mutual aid) to both towns
- This decreases our ability to cover GI and NH!!!

Towns around the state and region are losing their volunteer responders. Companies (AMCARE, Rescue Inc., etc) are picking up the slack, but at a cost. Underhill-Jericho that has a per call compensated "volunteer" First Response recently contracted with an outside company for transport services. One staffed ambulance, available 24/7, costs the two towns \$400,000/year.

Overall the trends in rural EMS are fewer people willing to volunteer. Volunteers are replaced by paid staff or services, resulting in higher costs to towns.

Please VOLUNTEER! Save a life!

Ray Mitchell, Grand Isle Rescue-President