

In an emergency situation, a main goal of first responders and emergency department personnel is to get people the competent and compassionate care they need efficiently. To foster that goal, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center has partnered with the Alton Fire Department to become the resource hospital for the AFD. Now six months into the partnership, Fire Department Chief Bernie Sebold is speaking out on its success so far.

Starting in September of 2017, OSF Saint Anthony's started its new role as the resource hospital for the Alton Fire Department. Alton FD had recently started its own ambulance service – eliminating the need for a private ambulance service to work as a patient pipeline between the two organizations.

Chief Sebold reflects on how the relationship was started, with the help of OSF Saint Anthony's President and CEO Ajay Pathak.

“Late in 2016 the Alton Fire Dept. was starting to raise funds for a mechanical CPR device. This was a community appeal where we were trying to improve our health care, on the emergency side, on the streets. We were trying to improve cardiovascular outcomes by having a mechanical CPR device to free up the hands of our paramedics on the fire trucks. Immediately Ajay reached out to the fire department and said, ‘How can we help?’ That was the door opening to a wonderful relationship,” recalled Chief Sebold.

The Alton Fire Department is currently running two ambulances. With 11 people on duty per day and two fire stations located on either side of the city, the current transport time averages three to five minutes.

According to Chief Sebold, cutting the middle man of a private ambulance company not only eliminates unnecessary delays in medical care, but it also allows his team to follow through on care, from first contact with the patient to future follow-ups at OSF Saint Anthony's.

“Since we are typically the first face a patient sees in the event of an emergency, and then now with us transporting, we're able to initiate care, continue care and then transition care to the staff at OSF Saint Anthony's, and my personnel particularly feels that's very personally rewarding because they kind of see that continuum of care, and then when they bring the next patient back to OSF Saint Anthony's, they're able to do kind of a little follow-up while they're there,” he said.

Sebold also added that the relationships that have been built between his team and the Emergency Department staff at OSF Saint Anthony's has been invaluable.

“When we have such a small system within the Alton Fire Department, the ability for the ED staff to know us by name is very easy. So building those relationships with the nurses, with the physicians, with our medical control really is paramount to the success of our organization and continually improving it,” said Chief Sebold. “They need to be able to trust our people. They need to be able to trust firefighter Smith on the streets.”

OSF Saint Anthony's is also providing continuing education for AFD paramedics. Chief Sebold says he is excited for the future, and believes that the partnership with OSF HealthCare will continually provide new opportunities to improve health care within the region.