

## **Responding to the First Responder Shortage**

### *New online course provides training for emergency medical responders*

For many rural communities, first responders rely heavily on citizen volunteers. These volunteers help to bolster resource-constrained fire and emergency service departments at all levels.

However, in many localities throughout the state very few people are volunteering, leaving too few providers to respond to emergency calls.

Craig Swartz is the assistant fire chief in the Saunemin Fire Protection District. He says numbers have been dwindling, and some days it's a struggle to staff the department, especially during certain times of the year.

"It's very wide spread. It's all departments. We do a lot with other departments around our community and they have all the same thing," explained Swartz. "I mean a typical response for us during the day may be one to two to three people during the day. My father and I, we farm, so obviously during planting and harvest season we are unavailable, so that dwindles numbers. 80% of our department are either farmers or farm related, so obviously those peak agriculture times are tough, and other departments are the same way in our area."

Because tight schedules are often a stumbling block for would-be volunteers, OSF HealthCare Saint James - John W. Albrecht Medical Center in Pontiac is working to providing training for these citizens with the help of online technology.

OSF HealthCare Saint James is launching an online Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) course. Emergency Medical Responders receive additional medical training beyond normal First Aid and CPR but do not engage in more complex medical procedures like those done by EMTs and Paramedics.

"Our communities are real small communities – the communities that we serve – and they rely on the public to get education and to get knowledge and become first responders and EMTs to work for their volunteer agencies and their communities and assist them," said Michael Mercer, the EMS educator at OSF Saint James.

The course will run from January 23 to March 14, 2020. It is designed to provide training in a way that is minimally disruptive. Students in the six week course do a majority of their training online, but have three required in-person sessions on Saturdays in Pontiac.

"We're all busy in life, we've all got kids. People have to go places and do things, and by having an online training like this, I think it's going to be better for our volunteers to get this, to help us out," said Swartz.

Registration for the Online EMR Course is now open. Please call 815-842-4984 or 815-842-6821 for more information.

## **ONLINE EMR COURSE SCHEDULE**

January 23 – March 14, 2020

## **Required in-person sessions:**

### Orientation (2 hours)

- January 23: 9:00-11:30 AM, 12:00 - 2:30 PM, *or* 6:00 - 8:30 PM

### Testing/Skills (8 hours)

- February 8: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- February 22: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- March 7: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM