

Clarifications to Misinformation Regarding Inter-Facility Transfers

This information sheet was created to ensure clarity in the topic regarding interfacility transfers from Adventist Health Columbia Gorge to Portland and Bend.

Reasons Why MCFR is Shifting Away from Interfacility Transfers: MCFR's main duty is to deliver 911 emergency services to the local community. The Oregon Health Authority has emphasized to our district and the hospital that an ambulance provider's priority is to offer 911 emergency response prior to allocating resources for interfacility transfers outside the local area. MCFR faces ongoing hurdles in fulfilling the hospital's transfer requirements while also providing consistent 911 emergency services to the community. The hospital will still have access to services as they are expected to set up an alternative provider or system for conducting interfacility transfers. During this transition, the Fire District will maintain interfacility transfer services.

Is this about Money?

- This is primarily an operational issue and not a financial topic for the Fire District. This is about getting the appropriate amount of responders on scene of emergencies within national standard timeframes and having enough emergency personnel to cover the 4,000 emergency 911 calls we receive every year.
- For the Hospital, the Adventist Health system will likely have to subsidize a provider or employ positions to meet their continuity of care needs.

When is MCFR going to Stop Providing Non-Emergency Interfacility Transfers: MCFR inquired with the hospital in April 2024 about the necessary duration to obtain an alternative agreement. To date, the hospital has not given a schedule. MCFR has stated its commitment to keep providing interfacility transfers until the hospital arranges a new contractor.

Who will conduct transfers: MCFR will continue to conduct emergency transfers in conjunction with our contracted relationship with Lifeflight. This includes using their crew and a MCFR ambulance to conduct emergency interfacility transfers when weather prohibits air travel.

Do My Tax Dollars Pay for this Service: MCFR conducts ambulance related services on a fee for service basis. Tax dollars fund the Fire District to conduct fire service response, rescue, prevention, education, investigation, plan review, and other Community Risk Reduction activities within the Fire District Boundaries. MCFR does not have the authority to tax for ambulance services.

Fire Med: MCFR will still provide and honor FireMed Coverage when any interfacility transfers are conducted by the Fire District or other government providers. MCFR has not asked Lifeflight to conduct flight based non-emergency interfacility transfers in place of their service.

MCFR Staffing: The fire service, nation-wide is experiencing a lack of Firefighter Paramedics and MCFR has lost Firefighter Paramedics to other providers, mostly within the metro area. Since 2019, 96% of Firefighters who have left MCFR went to agencies who do not conduct Interfacility Transfers. Though we



have been facing turnover, the Fire District has grown in its response capabilities from 22 qualified responders in 2019 to 42 Full-Time Regular positions budgeted with 36 of those positions filled. Additionally, 6 months of the year the District employs 4-6 Full-time Wildland Firefighters. When the District is fully staffed; it would not yet be meeting the National Standard of 16 firefighters to a fire within 8 minutes and to cover all medical calls for our service area without the need for outside agency coverage. Our District’s vision is to provide a continually more effective service. For transparency purposes, below is a chart of the District’s growth and turnover to illustrate net impact.

