Lakes Region EMS

Your Community Ambulance Service



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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Lakes Region



Executive Director's Report

Aarron Reinert, MA, NRP
Executive Director

FOUR PILLARS

+ **State-of-the-Art Patient Care**
+ **Outstanding Customer Service**
+ **Dedication to the Communities We Serve**
+ **Financial Health and Responsibility**



Lakes Region EMS

Does organizational culture and employee engagement really matter? It's a simple question — and one we've spent more than 20 years answering every single day at Lakes Region EMS. From the very beginning, our goal has been to build something different: a culture people don't just work in, but want to belong to. In 2025, we finally saw that long-term commitment put to the ultimate test — and the answer was clear: Yes, it absolutely mattered.

So, what do we mean when we talk about organizational culture? At its core, culture is how things really work when no one is looking. It's the shared values, assumptions, behaviors, and beliefs that shape how people show up for their work and for one another. Culture can happen by accident, or it can be intentional. Accidental culture simply takes shape when no one defines what they want — and whatever exists fills the gap, for better or worse. Deliberate culture, on the other hand, is a choice. It's what happens when leaders and employees commit to a shared vision and work together, day after day, to live it out.

Employee engagement is what that culture looks like in action. It shows up in how motivated people are, how committed they feel, how willing they are to go the extra mile — not because they have to, but because they want to. In 2025, Lakes Region EMS faced one of the most severe staffing challenges in our history, and those ideas were no longer theoretical. They became real, very quickly.

The summer of 2025 started like most summers — with anticipation for warmer days, green grass, lake cabins, and everything that summer in Minnesota and Wisconsin brings. While many organizations had already weathered post–COVID workforce shifts, Lakes Region EMS had remained relatively stable. That changed early in the summer. A combination of employment changes, leaves of absence, maternity and paternity leaves, and injuries collided at once, creating a perfect storm and a genuine staffing shortage.

We found ourselves asking some hard questions. Would we be able to staff all our resources? Could we continue delivering the level of service our communities expect? And if we made it through, what would Lakes Region EMS look like on the other side? This is where culture stopped being an abstract concept and became our anchor. When things felt most uncertain, when it seemed like we were running out of options, our people stepped up.

Former employees who had moved on to other careers came back to help. Current team members worked well beyond what was expected of them. They picked up ambulance shifts, supported the training of new hires, and actively helped recruit new staff — all while reinforcing what it truly means to be part of Lakes Region EMS.

The summer of 2025 will always stand out — not because of the adversity we faced, but because of how it was met. It reminded us that a strong, intentional culture, paired with deeply engaged employees, makes all the difference. It's the people who make Lakes Region EMS special. That has always been true — but 2025 showed us, without question, just how much it matters.



Aarron Reinert
Executive Director

MEDICAL DIRECTOR REPORT



Chris Ward, M.D.
Medical Director

In 2025, Lakes Region EMS experienced significant staffing changes within the education department. This period of transition required flexibility and a renewed focus on long-term goals. While these transitions created some short-term disruption, they ultimately positioned us for continuous improvement and growth. As new perspectives and processes took shape, the result was a stronger, more resilient educational framework that supports our crews and helps ensure they can continue delivering the highest quality care to the communities we serve.

Building on this renewed focus on education and clinical excellence, we also expanded the use of ultrasound technology to enhance bedside diagnostic accuracy for patients experiencing respiratory distress. This tool empowers clinicians to identify life-threatening conditions — such as tension pneumothorax — quickly and accurately, even when those diagnoses can be challenging to make in the field. Beyond pneumothorax, ultrasound also supports rapid differentiation of patients with severe congestive heart failure, allowing crews to more effectively prioritize treatments that address breathing difficulties.

As access to healthcare continues to shift across our region, we adapted our training to meet emerging needs. In response to the closure of several rural obstetrics facilities, we updated our education related to obstetric emergencies in the prehospital setting. While these events remain relatively rare, the loss of local obstetric resources means more patients may experience labor or delivery complications outside of hospital environments. This targeted training ensures our EMS crews are prepared to manage these complex, high-stakes situations with confidence and clinical precision.

These efforts were complemented by continued investment in cardiac arrest education and innovation. This winter, we continued focused training on cardiac arrest management, aligning our protocols with current best practices. At the same time, we strengthened external partnerships that support advances in rural emergency care. One such collaboration includes work with the University of Minnesota as it expands its rural Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) program. Cardiac arrest research continues to evolve, with ongoing efforts to identify treatment strategies that improve survival rates. ECMO is a hospital-based therapy that maintains oxygenation and perfusion — particularly to the brain — for critically ill patients, including those in cardiac arrest. In a forward-thinking effort to extend this life-saving intervention beyond urban centers, the University of Minnesota is partnering with several rural EMS agencies, including LREMS, to operationalize ECMO in more rural settings. This collaboration holds significant promise for improving outcomes and saving lives.

Medicine is a constantly evolving field. To remain effective, education and clinical practice must evolve alongside it. As new knowledge, technologies, and medications emerge, a commitment to lifelong learning and adaptation is essential. Our organization remains dedicated to staying at the forefront of medical care and delivering the most current, evidence-based practices to our community. Ultimately, our goal is simple and unwavering: to provide the highest level of care to every patient, no matter where they are.

Thank you,

Chris Ward, M .D.
Medical Director

PILLAR ONE

State-of-the-Art Patient Care

Clinical Development Introduction

At Lakes Region EMS, state-of-the-art patient care begins with a people-first approach. Throughout 2025, LREMS focused on supporting and developing its providers, recognizing that taking good care of the team is essential to delivering the highest level of care to patients. This philosophy underpins every patient encounter, ensuring consistency, sound clinical judgment, and professionalism across all settings and call types.

That commitment is reinforced through disciplined clinical practice, ongoing education, and clear expectations for excellence. LREMS recognizes and rewards individual providers for meeting clinical care benchmarks, saving lives, and demonstrating exceptional performance across all aspects of their role, with formal acknowledgment built into quarterly education sessions. By aligning provider support, accountability, and recognition with standardized clinical processes and modern tools, LREMS continues to strengthen both individual performance and system-wide care delivery.

Clinical Department Changes

The Clinical Department experienced important leadership transitions in 2025 that reinforced continuity and stability within the organization. In February, Ryan Quinn retired from his role as Director of Clinical Services after providing dedicated leadership and service. In April, LREMS welcomed back Darin Wendel as Director of Clinical Services, bringing experienced leadership and deep organizational knowledge back into the role.

The department further strengthened its education efforts in June with the return of Nick Eastman as Education Development Coordinator. Eastman quickly resumed a central role in clinical education, leading new hire training, Essentials of Critical Care courses, and quarterly education sessions.

The return of both leaders has been met with enthusiasm across the organization and has supported a smooth transition while maintaining focus on excellence, consistency, and continued advancement in patient care.

Clinician Development and Education

In 2025, Lakes Region EMS continued to expand clinical capability by pairing advanced tools with focused provider development. Our ultrasound scope was broadened to include pulmonary assessment, allowing clinicians to better identify, confirm, and trend conditions such as pulmonary edema, COPD, and tension pneumothorax. LREMS established an ultrasound superuser group early in the year to evaluate additional applications and assess their clinical impact and patient benefit.

Medication options were also expanded for both paramedics and EMTs, with new medications, routes, and dosing added to better tailor care to individual patient needs. These updates enhanced the department's ability to manage conditions, including hypertension, heart failure, shortness of breath, nausea, anxiety, and behavioral health crises, ensuring more flexible and patient-specific treatment options in the field.

Cardiac arrest care saw further advancement through new guidelines and progressive protocol updates. LREMS collaborated with the University of Minnesota Resuscitation Consortium to improve access to time-sensitive interventions for patients with shockable rhythms. This effort includes coordinated transport to M Health Fairview Wyoming Hospital, where cardiology teams work alongside rural mobile ECMO specialists from the University of Minnesota, with support from LifeLink III when appropriate. These partnerships strengthen regional response capabilities and improve access to advanced resuscitative care.



LREMS' reputation for education and professional growth continues to draw interest from providers and paramedic students alike. In 2025, the department invited EMT and paramedic students from surrounding programs to participate in multiple ultrasound training sessions throughout the year. These sessions provided hands-on learning opportunities while offering students a firsthand look at the culture of education, clinical excellence, and patient care that defines LREMS.

Quality Assurance as a Clinical Anchor

Quality assurance remained a cornerstone of LREMS operations in 2025, with a continued commitment to 100% case review for stroke, intubation, STEMI, and cardiac arrest responses. These high-acuity calls demand absolute precision, and a rigorous QA process ensures protocols are followed consistently and with clinical intent.

Throughout the year, the QA team leaned into deeper clinical insight, using targeted data review and case analysis to strengthen performance and reinforce accountability. As we look ahead, the focus is on sharpening analytical tools, accelerating feedback loops, and using patient care outcomes not just as benchmarks, but as drivers of smarter, more resilient clinical practice.

Tools to Do Our Job (Clinical Equipment, Equipment Standardization)

Access to reliable, modern clinical equipment remains essential to delivering consistent, high-quality patient care at LREMS. In 2025, we continued to focus on tools that support both clinical performance in the field and meaningful education and quality improvement behind the scenes.

LREMS expanded our use of OneScope video-recording laryngoscopes, enabling the clinical department to review 100% of field intubations with crew members. This approach strengthens airway management quality assurance by allowing clinicians to review technique, decision-making, and outcomes in a structured and supportive environment. The ability to share recordings for broader education has also enhanced peer learning and reinforced consistent airway practices across providers.

Through our biomed partner, Agiliti, we are able to maintain a strong preventive maintenance program that keeps diagnostic equipment reliable, calibrated, and ready for use.

To support the organization's extensive training and education demands, LREMS added an additional ZOLL monitor paired with iSimulate technology for simulation use. With multiple classes often running simultaneously, the additional simulation equipment ensures hands-on, realistic training experiences without limiting access or instructional quality. This investment reflects LREMS' commitment to preparing clinicians with the tools and scenarios they are most likely to encounter in real-world care.

Together, these equipment enhancements reinforce LREMS' broader strategy of standardization, transparency, and continuous improvement — ensuring providers are well-equipped, well-trained, and supported by systems that prioritize patient safety and clinical excellence.

Critical Care Provider Course

Lakes Region EMS continues to partner with FlightBridgeED to deliver multiple critical care classes each year, strengthening advanced education opportunities for both LREMS clinicians and visiting providers. LREMS hosts the in-person sessions, drawing participants from across the United States and supporting a wider community of critical care learning.

In 2025, LREMS expanded access to education by adopting FlightBridgeED as its Learning Management System, giving staff access to FlightBridgeED's critical care education library through an on-demand platform. This addition supports continuous learning and makes it easier for clinicians to reinforce key concepts between live trainings.

LREMS also increased its own internal on-demand education resources, recording education sessions and case reviews for ongoing reference and for new clinical initiatives. To keep employees current with short refreshers, reminders, and practical education touchpoints, LREMS integrates multiple tools — including FlightBridgeED, Handtevy, and First Arriving boards — as part of a consistent, year-round approach to clinical readiness.

Arrowhead Association EMS Conference & Expo

Lakes Region EMS brought its full sense of purpose and pride to the 2025 Arrowhead EMS Conference, held January 16–18 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in Duluth, Minnesota. Arrowhead has long been a gathering place for the EMS community, and this year's conference reflected not just our operational strength, but the people, values, and relationships that define our organization.

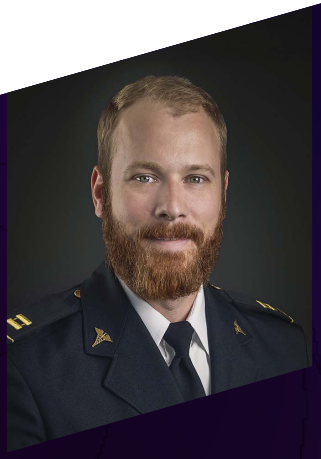
Representing LREMS was a diverse and deeply committed group of leaders, clinicians, educators, and support staff, including Director of Operations Ben Wasmund; Operations Manager Lee Huber; Operations Supervisor Sophie Voit; Vehicle Service Technician Courtney Martin; Vehicle Service Engineer Caleb Whaley; Education Development Coordinator Jon Misewicz; Paramedics Robert Burke and Kaleb Roeser; EMT Lucas Nadeau; and EMT and Quality Assurance Coordinator Cody Miller. Together, this team embodied the depth of experience and collaboration that allows LREMS to serve our communities with consistency and care.

Throughout the conference, LREMS maintained a prominent corner booth that became a welcoming hub for conversation and connection. Attendees were invited to sit, talk, and engage through interactive games while exploring our newest assets, including a 2024 Dodge Durango administrative response vehicle and a brand-new 2025 ambulance. Following the first day, staff joined a vendor-hosted social hour, where relationships were strengthened beyond the exhibit floor. Lakes Region EMS added to the spirit of the event by hosting a lively corn-toss game, creating space for informal conversations that often matter just as much as formal meetings in building trust across the EMS community.

Arrowhead also provided meaningful opportunities for growth and service. Staff attended a wide range of educational sessions, earning continuing education credits while expanding their clinical and professional perspectives.

Several participants engaged in a MnDOT crash simulator as part of the Toward Zero Deaths initiative, reinforcing the shared responsibility EMS providers carry in roadway safety. Others took part in the conference blood drive, giving back to the local community in a very tangible way.

Most importantly, LREMS was proud to support staff attendance as a recognition of their dedication and professionalism. Events like Arrowhead are not just about showcasing equipment or exchanging business cards — they are about investing in people, honoring commitment, and strengthening the relationships that allow us to do this work well. Through connection, education, and service, Arrowhead 2025 reaffirmed our organization's commitment to excellence and to the communities we are privileged to serve.



Star of Life

Daniel McIntosh has been a valued member of Lakes Region EMS since 2019. He began his career as a paramedic, providing high-quality care to patients in the field. He then stepped into the role of Field Training Officer (FTO) before progressing to Supervisor, where he continues to support both new and experienced staff while shaping the culture of the organization.

Daniel is one of our most devoted Supervisors. In addition to his supervisory duties, he leads New Hire Orientation, serves as SWAT Medic Lead, and guides the FTO program. His willingness to step into these critical roles demonstrates his commitment to both the organization and the community. What sets Daniel apart is not just his clinical expertise, but his dedication to people. He makes a difference through his compassion for patients and his ability to foster strong connections with colleagues. This past year, Daniel rearranged his schedule to ensure truck coverage while balancing his supervisory responsibilities. He has been instrumental in developing training standards, mentoring new hires, and creating a supportive environment for staff. Many of those he has trained are now serving as FTOs themselves, a testament to his leadership and influence.

Outside of work, Daniel enjoys spending time with his wife, Brittany. Together, they enjoy going to the cabin, four-wheeling, boating, or simply enjoying the outdoors with family and friends.

Lakes Region EMS is proud to recognize Daniel McIntosh as a Star of Life for his above-and-beyond commitment and all he has done to support his colleagues, mentor new providers, and serve the community with dedication and compassion.

Featured Story:
From Staffing Shortage to Wait List: A Culture-Driven Turnaround

Culture has always been central to how Lakes Region EMS operates — shaping how people show up for their work, for their patients, and for each other. That foundation mattered most during the height of the recent EMS staffing crunch, when agencies across the country were grappling with too few people, too many open shifts, and leaders doing whatever it took to keep ambulances staffed. Inside LREMS, the strain was real. From the outside, the impact was nearly invisible.

"The interesting perspective is I wouldn't have noticed that we were short-staffed," says Aarron Reinert, executive director and chief of EMS at LREMS. "We never had to change how we deployed our ambulances. We never had to delay the time it took to reach a patient."

That contrast speaks to how the organization approached one of the most difficult workforce periods in recent memory. The goal wasn't simply to survive staffing challenges; it was to protect the promises made to patients and communities, as well as to protect the internal culture that makes people want to stay.

"It certainly was a challenge," adds Reinert. "But it was a challenge that Ben Wasmund, our director of operations, and his team led with calm. It wasn't a crisis. Yes, we needed to do things, but there was a plan. They brought calm, they brought professionalism, and they brought commitment."

Today, the organization has moved from staffing shortage to a wait list.

Culture Didn't Suddenly Appear — It Showed Itself in Full Force

If the story ended at "we're fully staffed," it would miss the point. LREMS didn't flip a switch, roll out a flashy program, or build a culture overnight. The organization's leaders describe it as a long-term investment that became impossible to ignore when the pressure was on.

"I think what we really experienced was that the culture was always there, but when things were going well, it was almost transparent — we couldn't always see or feel it," explains Reinert. "When we got pinched, when adversity showed up, that's when we truly saw what we had built."

Wasmund frames culture the same way — as a competitive edge that holds when quick fixes don't.

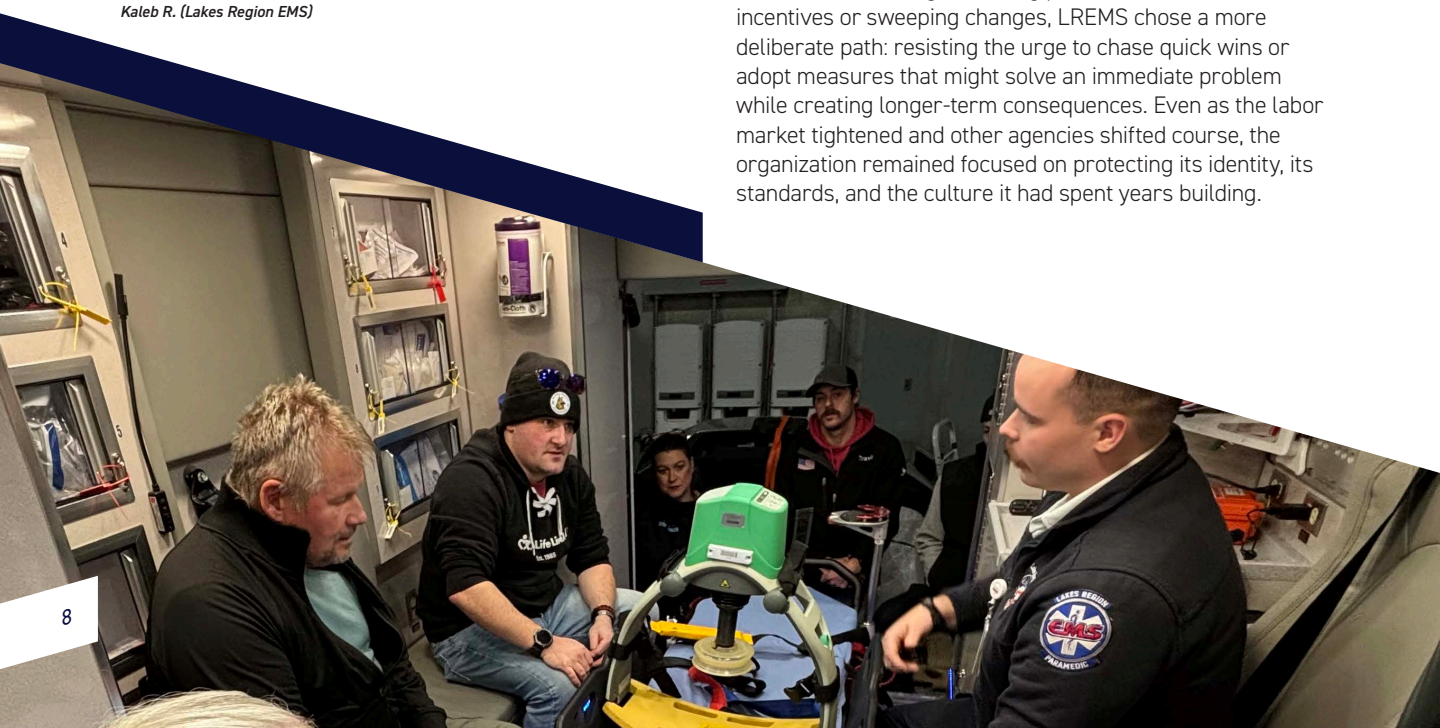
"One of the things that we believe is critically important to the success of an EMS organization is the culture of the organization," he says. "We believe it is the competitive edge that sets our EMS system apart from others."

In EMS, the work itself is largely the same from one organization to the next. What ultimately makes the difference is whether people feel drawn to an organization — and whether they choose to stay once they arrive. LREMS addressed that reality by being clear about expectations from the start and trusting that the right people would step forward.

"We want work to be a place that people look forward to coming to and see it as part of bringing value to their life, not just a punch-in, punch-out obligation," adds Wasmund.

Rather than reacting to staffing pressure with short-term incentives or sweeping changes, LREMS chose a more deliberate path: resisting the urge to chase quick wins or adopt measures that might solve an immediate problem while creating longer-term consequences. Even as the labor market tightened and other agencies shifted course, the organization remained focused on protecting its identity, its standards, and the culture it had spent years building.

Captured in the photo - Left to right; John C. (Cardiac Arrest Survivor), Chris H. (LifeLink III), Angela W. (Allina EMS Dispatch), Travis G. (Shafer Fire Department), Kaleb R. (Lakes Region EMS)



"We've not changed who we are. We've not changed what we believe in," says Reinert. "We've not gone down the slope of throwing money out there, lowering standards for finding people, or lowering standards for keeping people."

Instead, the organization held the line on what "fit" looks like — culturally, clinically, and operationally — even when it would have been easier to compromise. In a tight labor market, that decision takes confidence and patience. It also takes staff buy-in.

"This culture works because it isn't owned by leadership alone — it's everyone's responsibility," says Cassie Keocher, human resources manager. "We emphasize our story, what sets us apart, and what people can expect here, so individuals can decide early on if this is the right fit for them."

During the staffing crunch, leadership leaned on the internal team already living the culture to help bring in the next wave.

"Ben did a really good job of clearly sharing where we were and what it meant for the organization early on — and then continuing that communication consistently," says Operations Manager Lee Huber. "He also enlisted the help of staff in recruiting people they knew would be a good fit for our culture."

When Hiring Becomes a Sign of Progress

The numbers help illustrate what that approach produced — not just increased interest, but sustained stability during a period when many agencies were still scrambling to fill shifts. Between September 2024 and January 2026, LREMS logged more than 116 EMT applicants, 66 paramedic applicants, 56 applicants for other roles, and 35 internal applicants for roles. The last time the organization hired EMTs was September 2024 — and the first new EMTs since then will start in January 2026.

Wasmund notes another telling milestone: "This year we hired EMTs for the first time in 18 months."

And the reason wasn't turnover. It was progress — the result of employees advancing into new roles and career paths the organization had intentionally built.

"We not only were staffed, but we were fully staffed and even overstaffed to a point," he says. "Really the reason we're hiring at this moment now is because we've promoted these EMTs through our scholarship program and through supporting them to go to paramedic school … and we finally are in a position where we have to backfill those EMT positions because they've advanced in the organization."

That's the kind of problem leaders want: hiring because people are growing, not because people are fleeing.

Building Careers From Within

LREMS has long supported education, but the staffing challenge clarified where the greatest return truly comes from — investing in employees who already understand the culture, the expectations, and the communities the organization serves.

"The best investment we could ever make is not in someone outside the organization, but in the team members inside the organization," says Reinert.

A key example is the Paramedic Scholarship program and the organization's "school-time off" support. Employees can remain full-time and benefits eligible while dropping one paid shift per week (without using PTO) to focus on schoolwork and class. Since 2020, that structure has helped six employees complete medic school and obtain certification, with two more currently in school.

"We've found ways to support staff in more ways than just financially," says Keocher. "When we remove barriers — whether that's time for school, access to healthcare, or support outside of work — people are able to show up as their best selves."

LREMS has also built pathways beyond traditional promotions. Reinert points to the Field Lead role as a way for clinicians to explore leadership without an all-or-nothing leap.

"The field lead role explores, 'What if you're one of our paramedics who is interested in the thought of leadership but don't really know yet,'" he says. "It's a chance to lead and manage the organization … and if it doesn't work, they can return to their previous clinical role."

Beyond roles and education, LREMS emphasizes benefits that support long-term careers: healthcare cost decreases passed to employees, strong HSA contributions, a Lifestyle account reimbursement for wellbeing, referral bonuses, and the addition of Kavira — a supplemental health benefit fully paid by the organization that provides telehealth and in-home visits at no additional cost.

The goal is simple: Remove barriers so people can bring their best selves to work — and feel supported outside of work too.

A Culture People Choose — and Choose to Wait For

Ask Reinert what he hears most often about why people stay, and his answer is simple: "People say we're a family. We don't leave anybody behind. We're in this together."

That sense of belonging shows up in serious moments — and in small ones: the laughter, the camaraderie, the inside jokes, and the ways people take care of each other when things get hard.

It also shows up in what the organization sees now: people willing to wait for a chance to join.

"Words are certainly there, but actions speak louder than any of our words around culture and engagement," says Reinert. "The wait list is the byproduct of others seeing that culture and engagement really matter — and seeing an organization that practices it."

PILLAR TWO

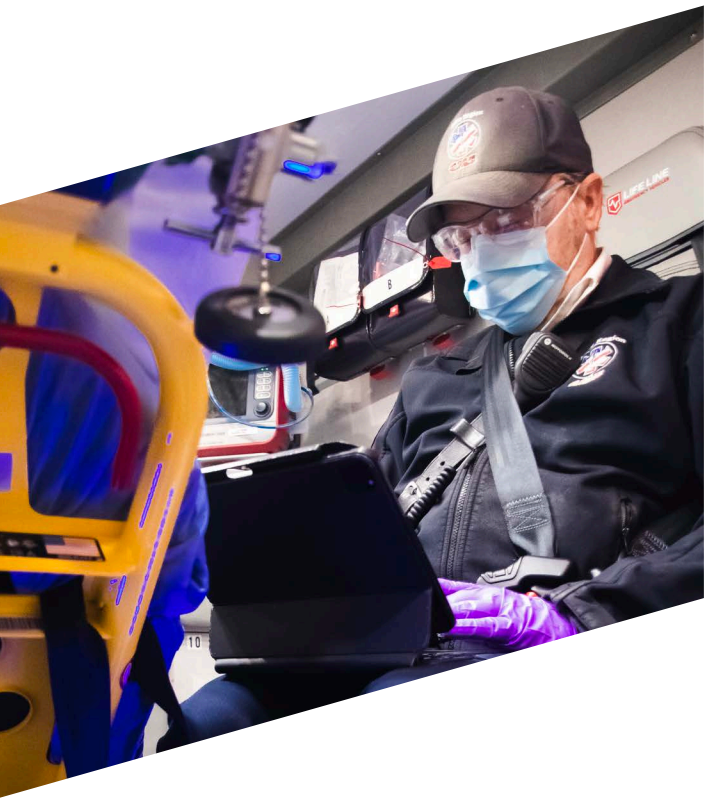
Outstanding Customer Service

At Lakes Region EMS, exceptional care extends beyond clinical excellence — it is grounded in how our team connects with people during some of their most vulnerable moments. Year after year, our EMTs and paramedics continue to demonstrate professionalism, compassion, and respect, reinforcing LREMS' role as a trusted and reassuring presence across the communities we serve.

Our commitment to customer service is reflected in every response, from clear communication and calm reassurance to attentive, patient-centered care. These everyday interactions build lasting trust and underscore our mission to deliver not only timely medical assistance, but a consistently positive experience for patients and families alike.

LREMS Annual Survey

In 2025, Lakes Region EMS continued our annual patient satisfaction survey to evaluate performance across four core areas: ambulance arrival time, courtesy, professionalism, and overall quality of care. The results once again affirm the high standards upheld by our crews and the strong confidence placed in our services by the community.



This year's survey scores remained exceptionally strong, with particularly notable results in courtesy and overall quality of care. Average ratings across all categories reflect sustained excellence and meaningful progress in patient experience:

- Ambulance arrival time: **4.7**
- Courtesy and kindness: **5.0**
- Professionalism of EMTs/Paramedics: **4.9**
- Overall quality of care: **5.0**

These results highlight the efficiency of our operations and the compassion and attentiveness our crews bring to every call. Patients consistently describe feeling safe, understood, and well cared for — outcomes that are just as vital as clinical success.

Community feedback continues to be a powerful source of encouragement for our team. Many patients took the time to recognize individual crew members and share how their demeanor and care made a difficult situation easier to navigate. Recent survey comments included:

- "Everything was excellent."
- "They were very kind and friendly. They did a great job."
- "Arrived very quickly!"
- "Great care."
- "Jake and Nikki were the best — kind, courteous, efficient and fun to talk to! Thanks!"
- "Ryan kept me in conversation mode on the way to the hospital. Olivia provided the best ride ever."
- "Very understanding, kind."
- "It was very nice!"

Beyond the exceptional survey results, patient responses highlight the human connection that defines LREMS. Patients frequently note how crews take the time to explain procedures, maintain calm conversation, and offer reassurance throughout transport. These moments — often small in action but significant in impact — help reduce anxiety and foster trust during medical emergencies. By combining clinical skill with empathy and clear communication, our team continues to set a standard for service that reflects both professional excellence and genuine care.

These expressions of appreciation serve as a meaningful reminder of the impact our work has every day. They reinforce the importance of customer service as a cornerstone of our mission and continue to inspire pride, purpose, and dedication throughout the LREMS team.



PILLAR THREE

Dedication to the Communities We Serve

At Lakes Region EMS, serving our communities means showing up in more ways than one. While we provide trusted Advanced Life Support and interfacility transport across Chisago County and parts of Isanti, Pine, and Polk counties, our connection to these areas runs deeper than our response calls. These are the communities where we live, work, and invest our time — and that matters.

Community involvement isn't a side effort for LREMS; it's part of how we operate. Through initiatives such as Anonymous Santa and our ongoing support of SWAT operations — along with many other local efforts — our teams stay engaged beyond the ambulance bay. Each year, we look for practical, meaningful ways to strengthen those relationships and meet needs that don't always come with lights and sirens.

Guided by our Charitable Missions Committee, we continue to seek out new opportunities to support residents, collaborate with local partners, and share health and safety education. Whether that means participating in community events, offering life-saving training, or quietly helping a neighbor in need, our focus remains the same: showing up with purpose and care.

LREMS is more than an EMS provider. We are a committed community partner, dedicated to making a real difference — not just in critical moments, but in the everyday lives of the people we serve.



2025 Community Event Participation:

Family Pathway's Chisago County Backpack Program

In 2025, LREMS continued to show up where it matters most — helping ensure local students have consistent access to nutritious meals beyond the school day. Through monthly backpack meal deliveries to North Branch schools and a $3,000 contribution to Family Pathways, LREMS played an active role in supporting the Chisago County Backpack Program.

This effort goes beyond addressing hunger. By reducing food insecurity for hundreds of students, the program helps create more stable learning environments, with educators noting improvements in focus, behavior, and overall well-being. It's a reminder that community care doesn't stop at emergency response — it extends into everyday moments that help children thrive.

Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and 4H

Hands-on learning took center stage as LREMS hosted local Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, along with 4-H groups, for interactive sessions on first aid, Hands-Only CPR, and AED use. These experiences provided young attendees with practical, life-saving skills while offering insight into the daily work of medics and EMTs, supporting badge achievement along the way.

Tours of LREMS headquarters and ambulances sparked thoughtful questions and meaningful conversations. Supporting youth organizations through education and exposure strengthens community safety and invests in future leadership, making these outreach moments among the most rewarding each year.

Chisago County Safety Camp

LREMS once again took part in the Chisago County Safety Camp, a free, one-day program designed to give children practical, age-appropriate safety skills they can carry with them every day. Through hands-on demonstrations and interactive sessions, students who had completed third, fourth, or fifth grade learned about bike and fire safety, first aid, how to call 911, and personal safety — all in an engaging, real-world setting.

The camp is made possible through strong collaboration among community partners, including the Chisago County Sheriff's Office, Lakes Area Police Department, Chisago City and Lindström Fire Departments, Lakes Region EMS, M Health Fairview Lakes Medical Center, Xcel Energy, Chisago County Public Health, and Peterson Companies. In addition to educational support, LREMS helped keep the day running smoothly by providing lunch for volunteers and snacks for participants. Working alongside these partners reinforces a shared commitment to preparing the next generation with knowledge, confidence, and awareness.

Anonymous Santa Program

LREMS celebrated 11 years of continued involvement with the Anonymous Santa program, a long-standing community effort that has supported local families for more than three decades. The program ensures children receive meaningful holiday gifts — from clothing and winter essentials to toys, games, sports equipment, books, and stocking items — helping ease seasonal stress for families facing financial hardship.

LREMS volunteers collected donations across Chisago County and parts of Washington County, working with local businesses and community members to rally support. Together, those efforts filled two ambulances with gifts, reaching approximately 200 children. The program's continued success reflects the strength of community partnership and a shared commitment to making sure no child is overlooked during the holiday season.

SWAT

In 2025, the LREMS tactical EMS team reached a meaningful milestone: 19 years of working shoulder to shoulder with the Chisago County SWAT Unit. This long-standing partnership strengthens safety when conditions are most volatile, bringing medical readiness directly into high-risk law enforcement operations and ensuring rapid care when seconds matter.

Over the past year alone, the tactical EMS team supported 13 critical incidents, delivering focused medical care in complex, unpredictable environments. Looking ahead to 2026, LREMS remains firmly committed to this collaboration — standing behind the SWAT unit and continuing to safeguard both those on the front lines and the community they protect.

Charitable Missions Committee

Established in 2016, the LREMS Charitable Missions Committee plays a central role in advancing the organization's community outreach efforts. The committee focuses on identifying meaningful ways to support individuals, families, and broader community initiatives, strengthening LREMS' commitment to service beyond emergency response. Through careful review of requests and thoughtful stewardship of resources, the committee ensures support is directed where it can have the greatest impact.

Throughout 2025, the committee approved 12 charitable requests in addition to its ongoing commitments. This included a $3,000 contribution to Backpack Programs in Chisago County schools and $1,000 scholarships awarded to graduating seniors at North Branch, Chisago Lakes, and Rush City high schools, totaling $3,000 in student scholarships.

Supporting the future of emergency medical services remains a priority. To further education and professional development, the committee allocated more than $19,000 to the Paramedic Scholarship Program, reinforcing LREMS' long-term investment in both our workforce and the communities we serve.

Community Education Space

LREMS' commitment to the communities it serves extends beyond emergency care and financial support to include education, training, and collaboration. Since 2014, the Community Education Space has been available through the Use of Facilities program, offering government agencies and nonprofit organizations access to a modern, well-equipped meeting environment at no cost. The space is designed to support in-person training, presentations, and community-focused initiatives through reliable technology and flexible layout options.

The Community Meeting Room accommodates approximately 80 people, while the Community Conference Room seats 16. Both spaces include internet access and presentation tools to support effective meetings and training sessions. The larger meeting room also features advanced video and audio-conferencing capabilities, along with a multi-function video wall capable of displaying up to five programs simultaneously.

In addition to supporting external partners, the education space is central to LREMS' internal training efforts, hosting EMT-Basic courses, CPR instruction, and other skills-based programs. By making these resources available, LREMS strengthens community connections while supporting preparedness, education, and public safety across the region.





Star of Life

Darrell Rohe represents the very best of Lakes Region EMS. Starting his career as an EMT, he has steadily grown into his current role as a Critical Care Paramedic and Field Training Officer. Along the way, he has embraced every opportunity to lead, teach, and strengthen the organization.

As an FTO, Darrell sets a high standard for new hires while providing the patience, encouragement, and honesty that help them succeed. He is known for blending accountability with approachability—offering constructive feedback when it is needed, while also showing others how to enjoy the work and build camaraderie. His commitment to the training process has been clear through his active participation in FTO meetings, often attending more than required and even while on shift. The success of the providers he has mentored is a direct reflection of his diligence and consistency.

Beyond training, Darrell continues to step up wherever he is needed. Whether supporting supervisors, holding his partners accountable, or picking up extra shifts to help keep ambulances on the road, he models the kind of engaged, dependable employee that strengthens the entire organization.

Darrell's career has also been deeply personal. His faith has been a steady source of strength throughout his EMS journey, shaping the compassion and resilience he brings to every call. It was also through Lakes Region that Darrell met his wife. Today, they are raising three children who light up when they hear sirens and proudly ask to hear their dad's work stories.

Outside of EMS, Darrell enjoys time with his family and making memories on their farm. His balance of professional excellence and personal devotion speaks to the kind of person he is and his commitment to both his family and his work.

It is an honor to recognize Darrell as a Star of Life for his leadership, dedication, and lasting impact.

School Drives and Donations

Supporting local students remains a meaningful part of LREMS' community involvement. Each year, contributions are made to high school senior class parties, as well as a range of sports and activity fundraisers across the service area. LREMS also awards a scholarship to one graduating senior from each local high school, helping recognize achievement and support continued education. Investing in youth initiatives reflects a long-term commitment to the communities LREMS serves and the future leaders within them.

Hands-Only CPR and AED Training

Expanding access to life-saving education continues to be a core focus of LREMS' outreach efforts. Hands-Only CPR and AED training sessions were provided to local churches, elementary schools, homeschool groups, and neighborhood co-ops throughout the service area. By teaching practical skills and building confidence to act in an emergency, these trainings help strengthen community preparedness and reinforce the belief that anyone can make a critical difference when seconds matter.



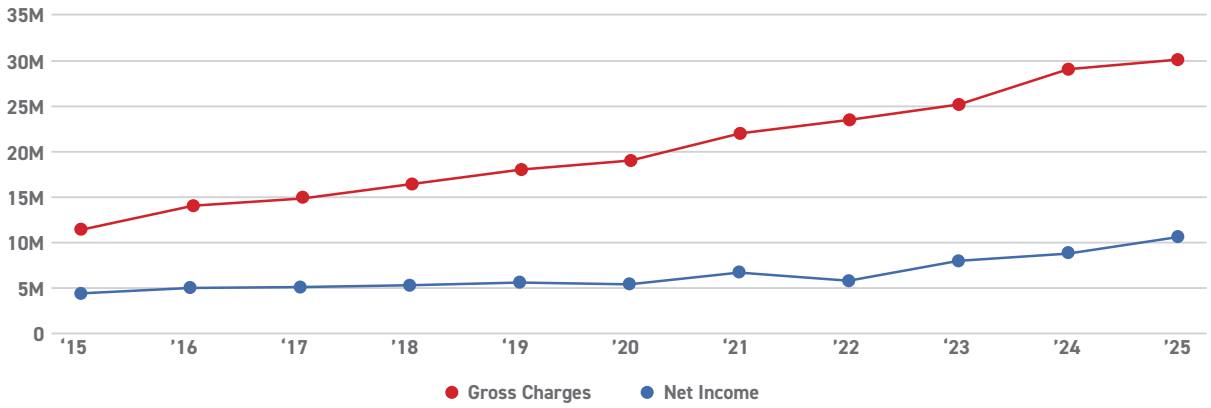
Financial Health and Responsibility

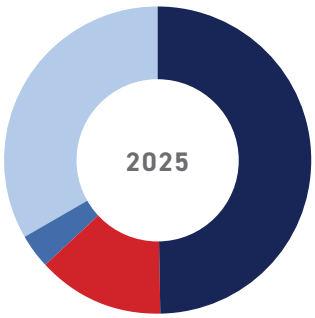
Financial stewardship at Lakes Region EMS is guided by consistent oversight and disciplined decision-making. Regular financial reviews allow leadership to evaluate performance, respond to changing conditions, and ensure resources remain aligned with operational needs and patient care priorities.

In 2025, the payor mix shifted modestly. Commercial payors remained stable at 20.6%, while Medicare declined from 58% to 56.8% and Self Pay decreased slightly from 3.8% to 3.6%. Despite the decrease in Medicare reimbursement and flat commercial payments, LREMS still achieved a positive bottom line.

LREMS closed out the year with an accurate run-volume projection, alongside a slight increase in loaded miles, from 113,492 in 2024 to 115,500 in 2025. The service responded to 6,770 requests and transported 5,030 patients, reflecting a 5.8% increase in 911 call volume and a 4.8% decrease in interfacility transfers compared with the prior year.

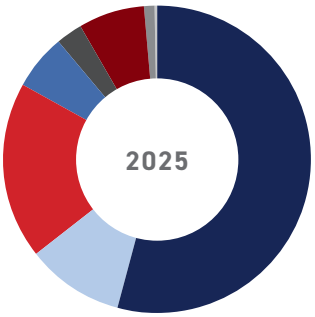
Operational sustainability at LREMS depends on careful oversight of reimbursement and revenue collection. After accounting for government and commercial payor adjustments, charity care, and bad debt, the organization realized approximately 37 cents for every dollar billed, with net patient revenue supporting operating expenses and the continued delivery of efficient, reliable services.





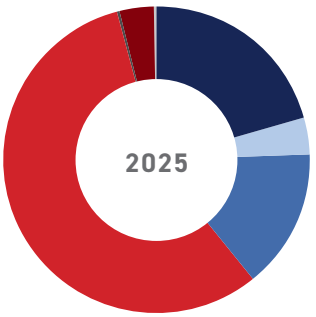
EXPENSES

- 49.72% Payroll
- 33% Other
- 13.35% Taxes and Benefits
- 3.59% Vehicles



PAYORS – MONEY RECEIVED

- 54.42% Commercial
- 18.58% Medicare
- 10.11% Government
- 7.16% Self-Pay
- 5.98% Medicaid
- 2.61% Auto
- 1.08% Work Comp
- 0.06% Other



PAYORS – BILLED OUT

- 56.5% Medicare
- 20.6% Commercial
- 14.5% Medicaid
- 4% Government
- 3.5% Self-Pay
- 0.3% Auto
- 0.3% Work Comp
- 0.2% Other

New Equipment

New Vehicles

In 2025, Lakes Region EMS prioritized reliability and lifecycle management over fleet expansion. The organization added two remounted ambulances, rebuilding existing modules onto new Chevy chassis to extend service life while preserving full clinical capability. By choosing remounts over full replacements, LREMS strengthened frontline readiness without absorbing the cost or lead time of brand-new units.

The organization did not add new administrative or supervisor vehicles this year. Instead, our leadership focused on keeping the existing fleet dependable, available, and ready for sustained call volume. The strategy was deliberate: Rather than grow the fleet, the organization invested in consistency, uptime, and long-term performance.

This approach reflects how modern EMS fleets operate. Ambulances serve as mobile treatment environments packed with critical equipment and expected to perform in every season and condition. When vehicles perform predictably, crews respond more efficiently, supervisors manage coverage more effectively, and the system absorbs demand with less strain.

Vehicle Design

LREMS made no major changes to ambulance layouts in 2025, but we continued strengthening how we outfit and support vehicles behind the scenes. By bringing more post-delivery setup and modification work in-house, LREMS shortened deployment timelines and increased consistency across the fleet.

The vehicle service engineer now completes all post-delivery customization internally, including radio installations, RFID hardware, and agency-specific equipment setup. This shift gives LREMS direct control over vehicle readiness and ensures trucks enter service configured by people who understand how crews work in real conditions — not just how equipment fits on paper.

LREMS also expanded in-house maintenance capabilities, reducing reliance on outside vendors and accelerating turnaround for routine service. These changes improved standardization across bases and shifts and reduced the risk that small inconsistencies turn into operational disruptions.

By treating vehicle readiness as a coordinated system — rather than a collection of one-off tasks — LREMS strengthened safety, reliability, and operational clarity across the fleet.



New Vehicle Systems and Features

There were no major layout or structural changes to ambulance interiors in 2025; instead, our organization chose to maintain a proven design that supports efficient workflows and consistent patient care. By preserving familiar layouts, crews were able to move seamlessly between units without adjusting to new configurations, reducing friction during high-stress responses.

The organization continued refining how equipment is positioned and accessed within each vehicle, prioritizing ergonomics, line-of-sight visibility, and ease of reach during patient care. Small, intentional adjustments — such as standardized equipment placement and consistent compartment use — help crews work faster and more intuitively, particularly during critical interventions.

Design decisions in 2025 emphasized durability and longevity, ensuring interior components could withstand heavy daily use without compromising safety or functionality. By favoring reliability over frequent redesign, LREMS reinforced a vehicle environment that supports both clinician confidence and patient safety.

In-House Vehicle Maintenance Program

The in-house vehicle maintenance program reached full operational strength in 2025, marking a clear shift from capability-building to sustained, day-to-day impact. What began as a gradual expansion now functions as a true mechanic operation, allowing LREMS to handle the majority of routine fleet service internally and on our own schedule.

We now complete oil changes, tire work, brake service, RFID installation, and most light mechanical repairs in-house. Vehicles that once lost half a shift or more — particularly those assigned to outlying bases — now return to service within hours, often the same day. Every hour gained directly supports coverage, reduces reliance on backup units, and keeps crews operating in familiar, consistently equipped vehicles.

External service is now reserved for specialized needs, such as alignments or internal engine work, with only a small number of vehicles sent off-site when necessary. By keeping trucks in-house, we have reduced logistical friction, simplified scheduling, and minimized the ripple effects that often follow extended service appointments — including vehicle swaps, staffing adjustments, and equipment rechecks.

As the program matured, maintenance planning became more intentional and data-driven. Staff now schedule service around fleet demand rather than vendor availability, using real usage patterns to guide decisions. This shift has allowed LREMS to treat maintenance as a proactive strategy instead of a reactive necessity.

Technology has played a supporting role in this evolution. Building on existing RFID and Operative IQ platforms, LREMS refined maintenance workflows, improved data accuracy, and used system insights to monitor fleet health more proactively. These tools reduced time-consuming manual tasks such as tracking equipment, reconciling inventory, and managing maintenance documentation after the fact.

In 2025, the organization also began using automation and AI-assisted features within existing platforms to streamline work orders and documentation. Automating uploads, reducing manual entry, and centralizing records improved efficiency and ensured maintenance histories remained complete and accessible. Applied across the fleet, these gains translated into meaningful time savings.

The results were tangible. LREMS reduced major mechanical interventions during the year and did not need to replace any engines in 2025 — a strong indicator that preventive maintenance efforts are working. By shifting away from reactive repairs and toward proactive upkeep, the organization protected coverage, limited schedule disruptions, and reduced mid-shift vehicle swaps.

Taken together, the in-house maintenance program has become a cornerstone of fleet reliability. It allows LREMS to control timelines, standards, and outcomes — keeping more vehicles in service, extending vehicle life, and strengthening operational resilience across the system.

Equipment Partnership

In 2025, LREMS directed equipment investment toward targeted upgrades with clear operational impact. The organization replaced five aging cots with five new FERNO Power X2 units, making a significant investment in crew safety and patient handling.

LREMS introduced the new cots deliberately, evaluating performance in real-world conditions across crews, calls, and environments. Improved lift ergonomics and handling reliability directly reduce injury risk and support clinician longevity. The organization also plans future FERNO integration, including full power-load compatibility, to further streamline loading workflows.

LREMS continued modernizing clinical equipment by replacing two additional Zoll cardiac monitors and refreshing Butterfly ultrasound units across the system. These upgrades strengthen point-of-care assessment and support faster, more confident clinical decision-making.

Together, these investments reinforce a clear 2025 priority: Build a fleet and equipment ecosystem that performs under pressure, stays available, and supports crews when it matters most.

Incident City | Lakes Region EMS

CITY	COUNT	PERCENT
North Branch	1.412	26.99%
Chisago City	722	13.80%
Rush City	575	10.99%
Lindstrom	440	8.41%
Township of Franconia	285	5.45%
Township of Chisago Lake	259	4.95%
Stacy	246	4.70%
Township of North Branch	127	2.43%
Wyoming	123	2.35%
Township of Sunrise	109	2.08%
Harris	92	1.76%
Shafer	92	1.76%
Center City	82	1.57%
Township of Nessel	79	1.51%
Cambridge	77	1.47%
Forest Lake	53	1.01%
Township of Fish Lake	46	0.88%
Township of Amador	43	0.82%
Township of Oxford	43	0.82%
Township of Rushseba	39	0.75%
Township of Shafer	30	0.57%
Isanti	29	0.55%
Rock Creek	26	0.50%
Saint Croix Falls	25	0.48%
Braham	15	0.29%
Minneapolis	15	0.29%
City of Chisago City	14	0.27%
City of Cambridge	13	0.25%
Osceola	13	0.25%
Taylors Falls	13	0.25%
Township of Isanti	12	0.23%
Township Of Royalton	9	0.17%
City of Isanti	7	0.13%

CITY	COUNT	PERCENT
City of Center City	6	0.11%
Columbus	6	0.11%
Scandia	6	0.11%
City of Wyoming	4	0.08%
Amery	3	0.06%
City of Braham	3	0.06%
City of Stacy	3	0.06%
Pine City	3	0.06%
Roseville	3	0.06%
Blaine	2	0.04%
City of North Branch	2	0.04%
City of Saint Croix Falls	2	0.04%
Grantsburg	2	0.04%
Martin Lake Census Designated Place	2	0.04%
New Brighton	2	0.04%
Stanchfield	2	0.04%
City of Lindstrom	1	0.02%
City of Mora	1	0.02%
East Bethel	1	0.02%
Grant	1	0.02%
Hudson	1	0.02%
Hugo	1	0.02%
Lake Elmo	1	0.02%
Lino Lakes	1	0.02%
Little Canada	1	0.02%
North Oaks	1	0.02%
Saint Louis Park	1	0.02%
Sandstone	1	0.02%
Spring Lake Park	1	0.02%
Town of Balsam Lake	1	0.02%
Township of Baytown	1	0.02%
Township of West Lakeland	1	0.02%

Transfer Origin of Calls | Lakes Region EMS

TRANSFER HOSPITAL	COUNT	AVERAGE OF DISP-ENROUTE	AVERAGE OF DISP-ARRIVE	AVERAGE OF TIME ON SCENE
St Croix Regional Med Ctr	921	37.16	45.45	18.91
Fairview Lakes Region Hospital - Wyoming	820	28.77	42.75	22
Osceola Med Ctr	255	39.53	63.07	19.08
Amery Hosp & Clinic	123	38.23	68.19	20.06
Cumberland Healthcare Hospital	104	74.63	117.99	28.25
Cambridge Medical Center	59	102.69	123.74	21.18
Burnett Medical Center	56	43.99	74.6	23.46
Spooner Health System	27	110.98	162.56	22.36
Essentia Health Sandstone	9	25.39	65.27	18.43
Indianhead Med Ctr-Shell Lake	5	41.27	102.12	28.36
Essentia Health - Moose Lake	4	35.74	107.79	27.5
Regions Hospital	2	206.59	235.52	17.5
Lakeview Hospital	2	121.23	5.98	27.32
Fairview University Medical Center	1	8.92	77.42	43.67
Mercy Hospital & Health Care Center - Moose Lake	1	36.18	88.85	19.8
Fairview Range Medical Center	1	41.23	210.62	63.43
Abbott Northwestern Hospital	1	4.27	4.27	22.25
Spooner Health System	1	487.58		
Fairview Northland Region Hospital - Princeton	1	8.93	46.52	25.12

2025 Employees

	EMPLOYEE NAME	JOB TITLE	YEARS
	Kirk Winkelman	Critical Care Paramedic	31
	Christine Rudolph	EMT-IV Tech	29
	TenaMarie Meyer	Clinical Education Manager	25
	Aarron Reinert	Executive Director	24
	Benjamin Wasmund	Director of Operations	23
	Gerald Carlson	EMT-IV Tech	21
	Kim Ditsworth	Sr. Billing Specialist	19
	Michelle Anderson	Director of Administration	17
	Jessica Keeney	Community Outreach	17
	Terry Kraabel	Advanced EMT	16
	Doug Volin	Critical Care Paramedic	15
	John Joswiak	Critical Care Paramedic	14
	Allison Stout	QA Coordinator	14
	Brian Meyer	Supervisor	14
	Lauren Buerkle	Critical Care Paramedic	13
*	Nicole Hall	EMT-IV Tech	12
	Darrell Rohe	Critical Care Paramedic	12
	Lee Huber	Operations Manager	12
	Jessica Anderson	Critical Care Paramedic	11
	Lonna Coddington	Advanced EMT	11
*	Elliot St Amand	Critical Care Paramedic	11
	Jason Anderson	Critical Care Paramedic	11
	Linette Erickson	Advanced EMT	11
	Brandon Trauba	Operations Manager	11
	Bruce Johnson	Advanced EMT	11
	Christopher Ward	Medical Director	9
	Joshua Brown	Critical Care Paramedic	9
	Carolyn Sundheim-Little	EMT-IV Tech	8
	Dakota Mechelke	Advanced EMT	8
	Brandon Folsom	Critical Care Paramedic	8
	Rebekah Leary	EMT-IV Tech	7
	Royce Hsiung	EMT-IV Tech	7
	Daniel McIntosh	Supervisor	6
	Dakota Miller	QA Coordinator	6
	Hunter Struemke	Critical Care Paramedic	6
	Jakob Kostecki	Supervisor	6
*	Alissa Behl	Supervisor	5
	Cassandra Keocher	HR Manager	5
	Nicole Dodge	EMT-IV Tech	4
	Daniel Struemke	EMT-IV Tech	4
	Olivia Hedlund	EMT-IV Tech	4
	Erin Bortz	Critical Care Paramedic	4
	Haley Krehmeyer	Critical Care Paramedic	4
	Amanda Dronen	Paramedic	4
	Taylor Gildersleeve	Paramedic	4
	Dawn Splittstoser	Administrative Assistant	4
	Carissa Zarich	EMT-IV Tech	4
	Kenton Pust	EMT-IV Tech	4
	Jaime Szczepanski	EMT-IV Tech	4
	Marc Kupka	Critical Care Paramedic	4
	Jennifer Hatcher	Support Service Lead	4
	Jeana Strelow	HR Generalist	4
*	Whitney Schmidt	Paramedic	3
	Cory Rossini	Critical Care Paramedic	3
	Heidi McCurdy	Accountant	3
*	Kenneth Hyrkas	Paramedic	3

	EMPLOYEE NAME	JOB TITLE	YEARS
*	Carter Steele	Paramedic	3
	Robert Burke	Critical Care Paramedic	3
	Sophie Voit	Supervisor	3
	Aaron Schneider	Critical Care Paramedic	3
+	Darin Wendel	Director of Clinical Services	2
+	Nicholas Eastman	Ed Development Coordinator	2
*	Luke Gruhlke	Paramedic	2
	Lucas Nadeau	Paramedic	2
	Courtney Martin	Vehicle Service Technician	2
	Lukas Olson	Critical Care Paramedic	2
	Brianna Garner	Paramedic	2
	John Barnes	Field Lead	2
	Nicole Fortune	EMT-IV Tech	2
	Jacob Wettschreck	EMT-IV Tech	2
*	Brandon Scharmer	Paramedic	1
	Kaleb Roeser	Critical Care Paramedic	1
*	Ryan Quinn	Dir of Clinical Services	1
	Caleb Whaley	Vehicle Service Engineer	1
	Ashley Smith	EMT-IV Tech	1
	Lucas Grimsby	EMT-IV Tech	1
	Emily Pinkston	Controller	1
	Mason Stebleton	EMT-IV Tech	1
*	Chad Mueller	Paramedic	1
	Jacob Bearl	EMT-IV Tech	1
	Cayden Herfindahl	EMT-IV Tech	1
	Lisa Strenke	Advanced EMT	1
	Katrina Jost	Paramedic	1
	Paul Morrison	Field Lead	1
	Alyssa Bowman	Paramedic	1
	Savanna Olson	EMT-IV Tech	1
	Isaac Baker	EMT-IV Tech	1
	Kaleb Rutgers	Paramedic	1
	Adrian Walczak	Paramedic	1
	Lauren Hamme	Paramedic	1
	Ryan Dziubak	Paramedic	1
*	Danielle Graham	EMT-IV Tech	0
*	Jon Misewicz	Ed Development Coordinator	0
*	Baptiste Beauvais	Paramedic	0
*	Chloerice O'Flanagan	Advanced EMT	0
*+	Thomas Gonsior	Paramedic	0
*+	Cory Pepper	Paramedic	0
*+	Jaxon Johnson	EMT-IV Tech	0
+	Nicholas Johnson	Paramedic	0
*+	Robert Wensel	Paramedic	0
+	Amy Thompson	Paramedic	0
+	Jada Horbach	Paramedic	0
+	Danielle Printy	Paramedic	0

+ New Employee in 2025
* Employee left in 2025

