



# 2007 Rural Florida Board of County Commissioners Survey Survey Report

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*Produced by:*

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## **Introduction**

The Florida Association of Rural EMS Providers (FAREMS) is an alliance of rural Florida emergency medical service (EMS) agencies whose purpose is to improve the individual agencies' capability of providing prompt, quality emergency medical response to citizens they serve. This is the first survey completed by FAREMS for the purpose of better understanding what county commissions know about the needs of the EMS service in their rural county. These results will better able FAREMS to discuss appropriate EMS issues with county commissioners as requested by member EMS agencies.

## **Methodology**

In October 2007, the FAREMS *2007 Rural Florida Board of County Commissioners Survey* survey tool and instructions were distributed to 162 commissioners serving in the 33 rural counties of Florida; 135 were distributed via U.S. Postal Service and 27 via email (Figure 1). These commissioners were asked to remit the survey by November 15, 2007, in a provided post-paid envelope or via fax. Fourteen of the 162 distributed surveys were completed and returned for a response rate of 8.6 percent. A list of the counties where the respondents serve is included in *Appendix A*.

The survey tool was brief and consisted of 11 questions. Questions were asked about knowledge of EMS personnel salaries, recruitment, emergency medical dispatch, youth corps programs, general health of community, needs of local EMS, and how property tax cuts would affect their county EMS agency. Respondents were also asked to submit their name and address if they would like to receive a copy of this completed survey report. A copy of the survey tool is included in *Appendix B*.

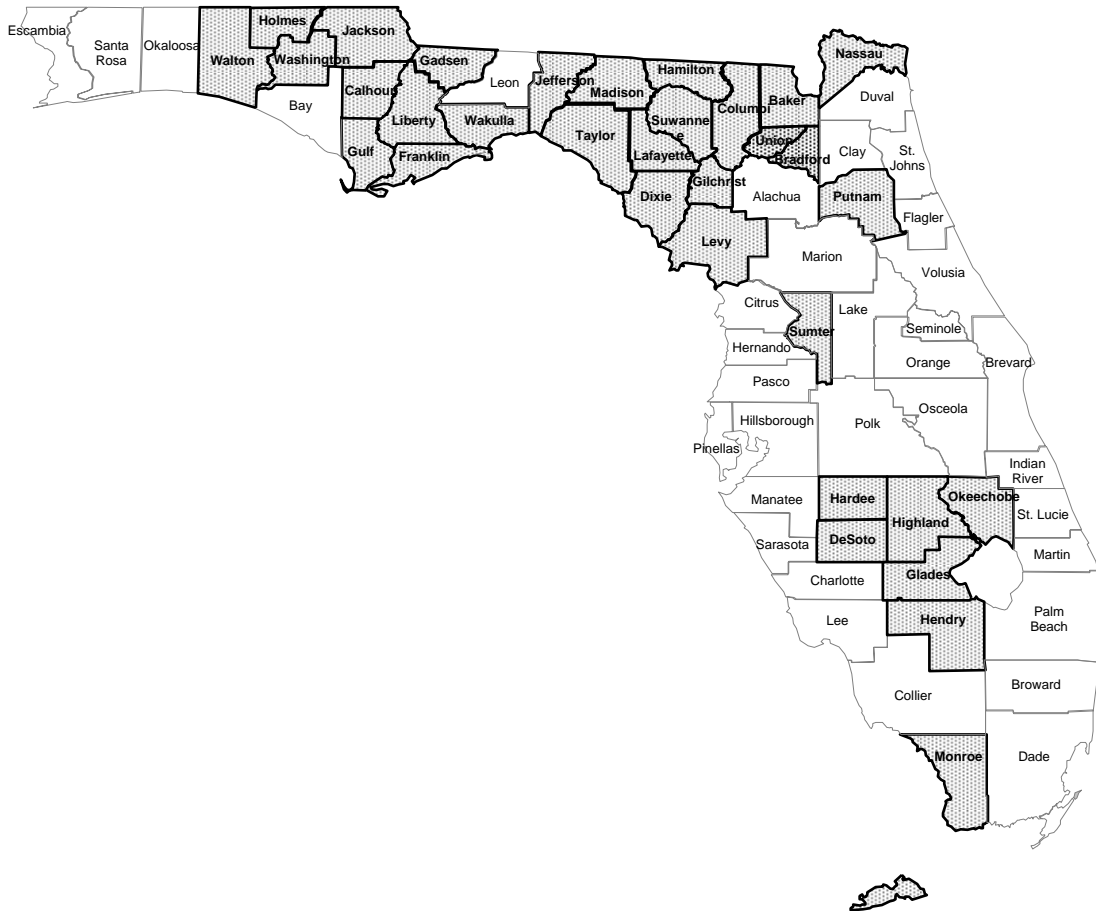
Some responses discussed in this report are compared with responses garnered directly from rural Florida EMS agencies in the FAREMS' *2007 Rural Florida EMS Agency Survey* completed in October 2007.

## **Limitations**

Some survey respondents chose not to answer every question on the survey. Results presented in this report reflect percentages based on the number of respondents who answered a particular question, hereafter identified as "n". Questions marked incorrectly, or not at all, were not analyzed.

This report parallels the survey tool and shows frequencies and summaries of responses.

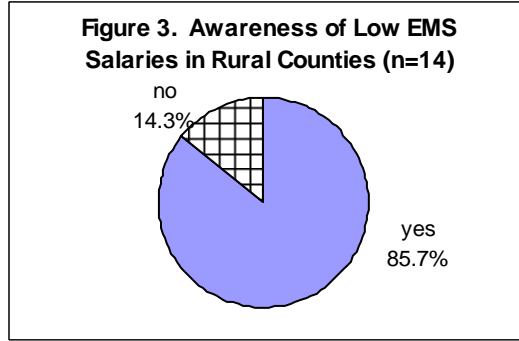
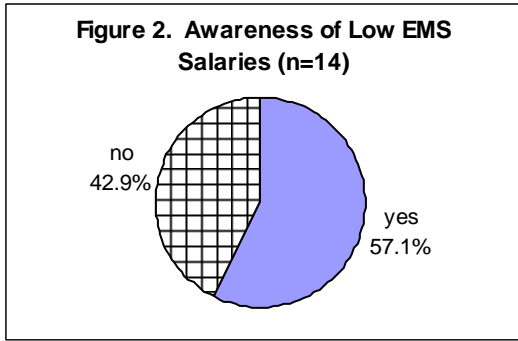
**Figure 1. Survey distribution.**



## Results

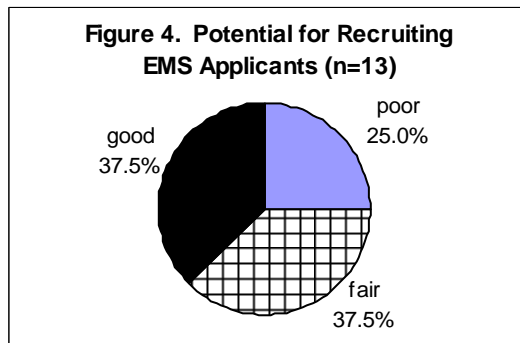
### EMS Salaries

In rural areas, barriers to EMS personnel recruitment and retention include low pay with minimal benefits. Rural agencies are often in competition with more urban areas for a limited pool of EMS personnel, and some of Florida's rural EMS agencies still continue to pay wages barely above federal minimum wage standards. To gauge rural county commissioners' knowledge of salary disparity among rural EMS employees, respondents were asked if they are aware of the low pay of many EMS workers. When asked if they know that many EMS workers are paid wages slightly higher than minimum wage, 57 percent indicate they are (Figure 2). When asked if they know that many of the lowest paid EMS personnel work in rural counties, nearly 86 percent of respondents indicate they are (Figure 3).



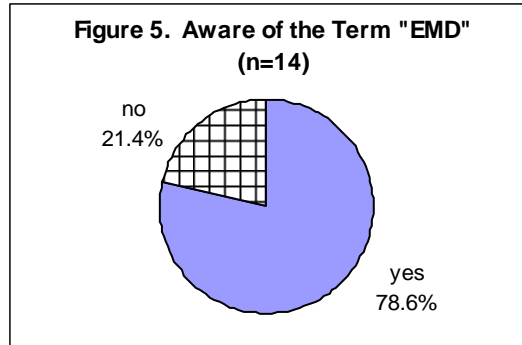
## Recruitment

When asked to rate their community’s ability to recruit qualified EMS job applicants, no survey respondent indicated a response better than “Good,” and nearly 63 percent indicated either “Poor” or “Fair” (Figure 4). This corresponds closely to similar survey question responses by rural EMS agencies in October 2007, where 23.5 percent of respondents rate the potential for recruiting qualified staff as “Poor” and 47.1 percent as “Fair.”



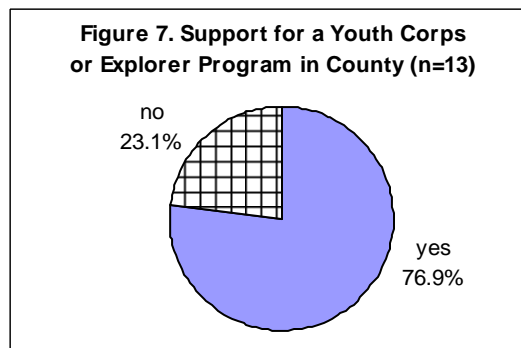
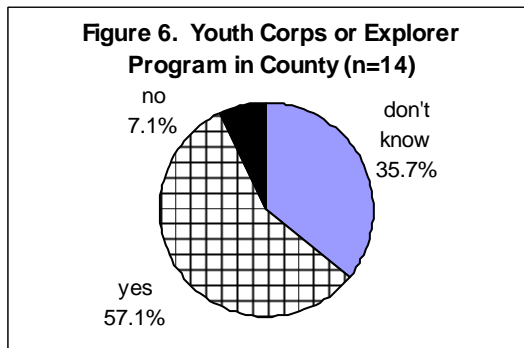
## Emergency Medical Dispatch

Emergency medical service response times in rural areas are markedly longer than in more urban areas. Effective emergency medical dispatch (EMD) is sometimes called “zero-minute response” because trained call-takers can begin to assess medical emergencies immediately and give potentially life-saving pre-arrival information and instructions to 911 callers. In many rural Florida counties, EMS dispatch is provided by the local law enforcement agency that may not be aware of the benefits of such a system. Nearly 80 percent of survey respondents indicate they know what EMD is (Figure 5). According to EMS agencies surveyed in October 2007, the reasons for not providing EMD were that it is too costly, the benefits are unknown, and control of dispatch by law enforcement.



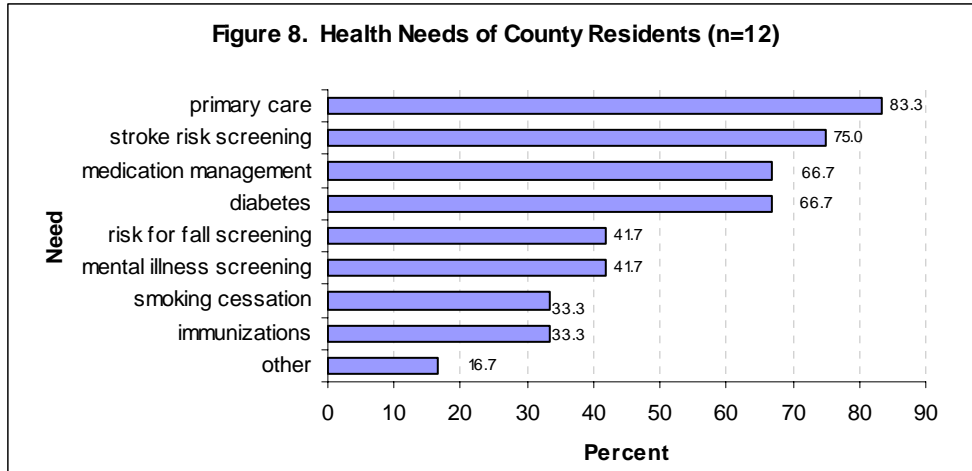
### Youth Corps/Explorer Programs

A youth corps or explorer program can be a great way to recruit EMS professionals from within the local community.—youth who want to work and stay in their hometown but are not aware of the opportunities available to them. Of the 14 survey respondents, 57 percent indicate their county has a Youth Corps or Explorer program for pre-hospital health professions (Figure 6), and overall, nearly 77 percent of respondents indicate they would or do support such a program (Figure 7).



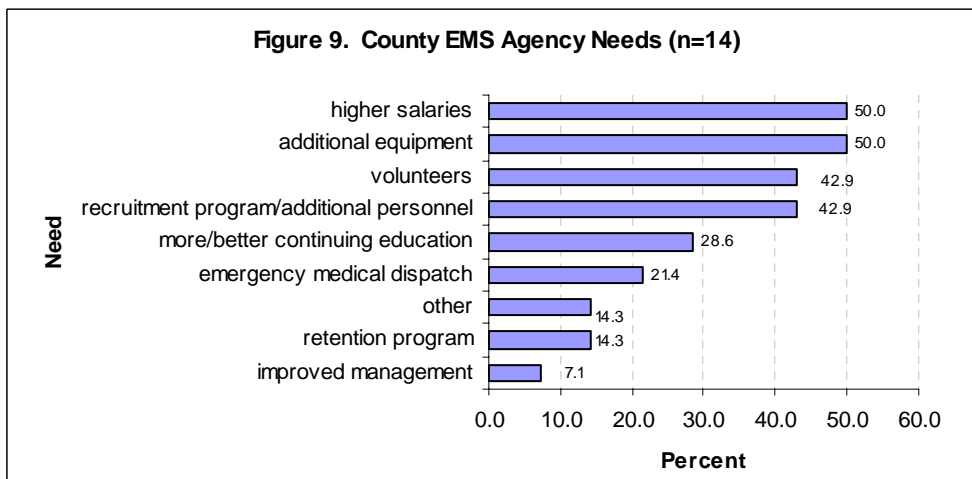
### Community Health Needs

In many areas, pre-hospital providers are taking on more responsibility in the healthcare of residents in their community. Sometimes referred to as “paramedicine” some EMS agencies are providing healthcare services other than emergency care, including, geriatric well-being checks, diabetes screening, risk assessments, and more. In order to begin to think about other services an EMS agency can provide, respondents were asked their opinion on health needs in their local community. Over half of respondents indicate health needs of county residents as primary care, stroke risk screening, medication management, and diabetes (Figure 8). When asked a similar question, EMS agency directors indicated the same health needs in their community (68.8% medication management; 62.5% stroke risk screening; 62.5% primary care; and 62.5% diabetes screening).



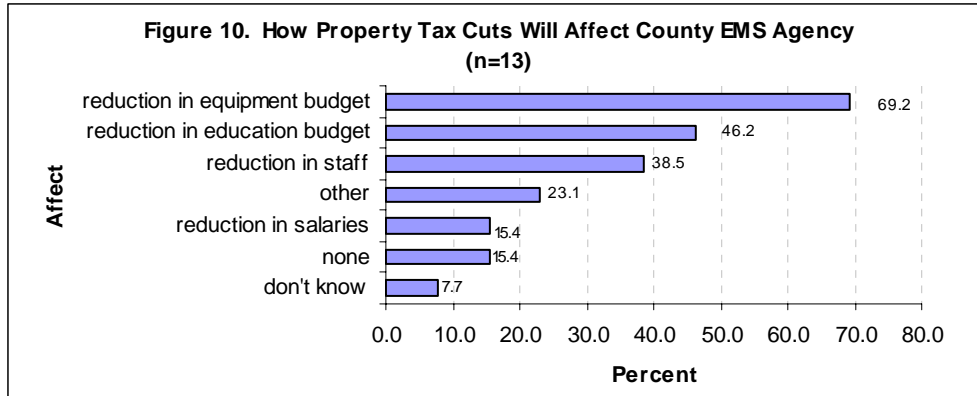
### EMS Agency Needs

Commissioners were also asked their opinion on the needs of the EMS agency in their county. Half of respondents indicate their EMS agency needs higher salaries and additional equipment (Figure 9). When asked a similar question, EMS agency directors indicated their needs as additional personnel (70.6%), recruitment program (64.7%), retention program (52.9%), and additional equipment (52.9%).



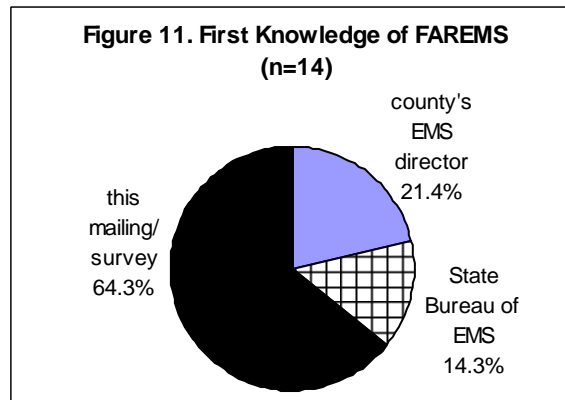
### Tax Cuts

Respondents were also asked how they expect approved and proposed property tax cuts to affect their county's EMS agency. Over two-thirds (69.2%) indicate they expect there to be a reduction in the EMS equipment budget.



## FAREMS

When asked where they first heard about FAREMS, more survey respondents (64.3%) indicate that this survey mailing was the first they had heard of this organization (Figure 10).





## Appendix A: Counties Where Respondents Serve

COUNTY	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Bradford	1
Gilchrist	1
Glades	2
Hardee	1
Holmes	2
Monroe	1
Nassau	1
Putnam	1
Suwannee	1
Wakulla	2
unknown	1



## Appendix B: Survey Tool



### 2007 RURAL FLORIDA BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SURVEY

All information from individual surveys will be kept confidential. Your answers will be summarized for statistical purposes only.

Check or short answer the following questions as appropriate.

1. Did you know that some emergency medical service (EMS) personnel (including those who are first responders on the scene for accidents and other critical care situations) are paid less than \$7 per hour, just slightly higher than minimum wage?

- No  Yes

2. Are you aware that many of the lowest paid emergency medical service personnel in Florida work in rural counties?

- No  Yes

3. How do you rate the potential for recruiting qualified EMS job applicants in your community?

- Poor  Fair  Good  Very good  Excellent

4. Do you know what is meant by the term "emergency medical dispatch" or "EMD"?

- No  Yes

5. Does your county have a Youth Corps or Explorer program for pre-hospital health professionals?

- Don't know  No  Yes

6. Would you (do you) support a Youth Corps or Explorer program in your county for middle and high school youth to learn about pre-hospital health careers?

- No  Yes

7. In your opinion, what are the health needs of your county residents? (Check all that apply.)

- Diabetes screening  Risk for falls screening  
 Immunizations  Smoking cessation  
 Medication management  Stroke risk screening  
 Mental illness screening  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Primary care

8. In your opinion, what does the EMS agency in your county need? (Check all that apply.)

- Additional equipment  Recruitment program/additional personnel  
 Emergency medical dispatch  Retention program  
 Higher salaries  Volunteers  
 Improved management  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 More/better continuing education

9. How do you expect approved and proposed property tax cuts will affect your county's EMS agency? (Check all that apply.)

- Reduction in current staff  Reduction in equipment budget  
 Reduction in education budget  Reduction in salaries  
 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

10. For what county do you serve as a commissioner? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Where have you heard about the Florida Association of Rural EMS Providers (FAREMS) before? (Check all that apply.)

- My county's EMS director  This mailing/survey is the first I have heard of FAREMS  
 State Bureau of EMS  Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU for participating in this important survey.  
We appreciate your time and all you do for your community.**

Please send your completed survey back to us by **November 15, 2007**, in one of the following ways:

1. Mail in the stamped envelope provided, or to: FAREMS, PO Box 358582, Gainesville, FL 32635-8582
2. Fax to: 1-386-462-2292

## Appendix B: Survey Tool

- I would like to receive a copy of the *2007 RURAL FLORIDA BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SURVEY* final report.
- Please put me on your mailing list to receive information and updates about FAREMS activities.

Name:

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County:

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Email Address (preferred):

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Mailing Address:

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City, ZIP:

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