

Immediate Press Release – Update on Richland County EMS

Richland County
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For immediate release: October 16, 2025

The County Board took action earlier this year to end the current service model for the Richland County EMS as it was not fiscally sustainable. This agreement had been in place since 2014 and had been intended to last only one year. In 2025, it became very clear that we could no longer sustain the service under the terms of that 2014 agreement. The Richland County Board acted to end the previous agreement, effective 12/31/25.

We have been in discussions over the last couple of months with municipalities currently served by Richland County EMS to plan for 2026 and beyond. The County has developed a new contract structure reflecting the costs of operating the service, staffing it fully and keeping it viable moving forward. This did result in increased costs for the municipalities involved, in some cases significant increases. We created the agreement with a one-year term to give time for consideration of other ways the service could be provided to the affected municipalities, while still creating a period of stability for the County's budget and for the dedicated, professional staff currently employed by Richland County EMS.

Municipalities have asked for an extension of current contract terms for 3 months to give them time to explore alternatives. The County has offered a 3-month interim agreement to satisfy this request, even though it creates uncertainty for Richland County and the ambulance service. There will be a vote on this request at the full county board meeting on October 20 at 7 pm.

If no agreement is reached by the end of the three months, the service will end. We don't want that to happen, however, if we don't have an agreement with participating municipalities, there is no way we can continue to operate the service. If we do not have enough municipalities willing to participate, we cannot continue to operate the service.

Richland County is very proud of our EMS staff and the high quality of service they provide when citizens call for their assistance. We would like to continue offering that level of service, but the County is not able to fund this service. Our 2026 budget is already drawing down around a quarter-million dollars of our financial reserves. Operating the ambulance service under our previous contract terms would require even more depletion of the County's financial reserves.

We remain hopeful that a new agreement can be reached quickly in cooperation with the municipalities currently served by Richland County EMS that will ensure continued, high quality service whenever it is needed.