



RAPID CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Prepare, Prevent, Protect



To: Mayor Sam Kooiker, City Council Members
From: Jason Culberson, Assistant Chief-EMS Operations
Subject: Paramedic School Incentive Pay
Date: 01/06/2015

Proposal: Pay employees that are going to Paramedic school a completion incentive in lieu of hourly pay for online classroom work.

The Rapid City Fire Department EMS Division has a continual need to bolster its current roster of Paramedics since our call volume is increasing. We have a need to increase our Paramedic numbers to deal with this issue. Not only is our workload increasing, but we are dealing with the loss of employees which increases the pressure on our current employees. The department's plan to deal with these issues are to hire more Paramedics through the hiring process and sending current employees to Paramedic school. Currently we have 46 Paramedics in the field working 24-hour shifts and responding to calls. The department's current goal is 51 Paramedics.

We hired three Paramedics in the 2014 hiring process. The current staffing of 46 includes the three new hires. We do not plan to hire again until 2016. Sending some of the 61 EMTs to Paramedic school allows us to increase this number without hiring additional staff. Our goal is to send 4-6 of our current employees to school.

A few years ago the department offered an incentive to attend Paramedic school. This included tuition, books, fees, overtime, and backfill to attend the class and participate in the clinical hours. This is a very expensive endeavor. However, the Paramedic is a vital piece to our operations. The incentive is an investment in the future of this department. Total direct cost has ranged from \$15,000-\$20,000 per student. This includes all fees and overtime/backfill to complete the class and take the test to become a Paramedic.

The classroom takes 640 hours (Carnegie Mellon Hours, hour= 50 minutes) with another approximately 1,000 clinical hours to complete the course and be eligible to test for National Registry Paramedic. The current class will be an online didactic with lab hours required twice a month. The lab is an eight hour class that teaches the skills (IV/intubation) that will be required to be successful in the clinical rotations.

In the past the students attended a traditional classroom at Western Dakota Tech with clinical sites throughout the hills. We paid them for hours worked and covered their shifts (back-fill) when they were on-duty and when they are required to be at class or clinical site. With the classroom being on-line, it becomes very difficult to manage the hours. There are no set hours that they have to log on, work on school work, or watch a class. This means the student is on his/her own to manage their time to complete the work. They have to complete each section within a certain time frame; there are no set days that they attend class.

I propose we pay them a completion incentive in lieu of hourly pay to take the online class. This is only for the classroom portion. When they are required to be at a class for lab hours they will receive pay or we will backfill for them. I believe we need continue this to incentivize our employees to attend and pass this demanding class.

In 2011 the class attendees (four students) received on average \$3,200 in overtime pay for the classroom portion. In 2012 the class attendees (seven students) received on average \$5,500 in overtime pay for the classroom portion. These figures include the lab days required. 2012 costs were higher due to the class size and the time it took to instruct eight students versus four.

The EMS Division is proposing paying the students a sum of **\$4,000 as an incentive to complete and pass the course** and as a consideration for the time they spent doing online classroom work. This will be payable upon successfully passing the Paramedic National Registry written and practical test. The students will still receive their pay for hours worked during the lab days and clinical hours.

I believe this is more than fair and is positive not only for the employee but the City and the EMS Division Enterprise Fund. This figure was derived by taking the average of the past two years (\$4350) and subtracting a few hours from the total to account for the lab hours (approx. \$453) for which they will be paid. The incentive will not be paid until they complete all phases and pass the written and practical exam. This will take place in late 2015 or early 2016. Either way the money is accounted for in our current budget. By doing this we will save the money in backfill overtime (covering the student while he was on shift) payable to the other employees. The cost for backfilling the classroom portion accounted for \$5,660 (\$1,415 per student) in 2011 and \$18,150 (\$2,593 per student) in 2012. This will account for a significant savings to the Enterprise fund.

The money used to pay for the incentive will come from the EMS Enterprise Fund. No General Fund dollars will be used to pay the incentive.

This is time sensitive. An approval as soon as possible would be greatly appreciated to assist me in planning. The class is projected to start in early February 2016. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Jason Culberson
Assistant Chief-EMS Operations