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The Ambulance Wheels Are Turning

By Nick Marnell

In his search for more revenue and to increase efficiency in the operations of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, fire chief Jeff Carman identified a unique opportunity: that the district compete for the exclusive operating contract for ambulance service in Contra Costa County. The county's current ambulance provider is American Medical Response, whose contract expires in December 2015.

Carman presented the idea to the Board of Supervisors in April, and the board approved his request to hire a consultant to analyze the feasibility of ConFire assuming that contract.

After completing the request for proposal process, the district entered into an agreement with The Ludwig Group, a fire and emergency medical services consultant in Memphis, Tenn. headed by Gary Ludwig, a national fire and EMS professional with more than 30 years experience in the industry.

"We received three proposals," said the chief. "Two were very close in price, and Ludwig was a little higher in price than the low bid but his background lends itself to a lot of credibility in this area of expertise." A consultant fee of up to \$15,000 was approved by the board; the report from Ludwig is expected no later than Aug. 1.

The Ludwig Group recently completed a study for the Loudoun County, Va. Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management on the establishment of an EMS transport reimbursement program. In January, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors approved Ludwig's recommendation and the program is expected to be implemented in July, confirmed Mary Maguire, spokeswoman for the department.

"Gary will give us a good report we can trust," said Carman. "I know we are going into a fight with AMR, but I'd be negligent on behalf of the district not to do it."

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