

Last week we left the EMS story talking about funding and discussing ESDs (Emergency Services District) which are the special taxing districts I have mentioned. Bexar County, Montgomery County and Harris County (and many others) are funded by these. I have not found another county our size that does not share the EMS responsibility with the cities or have ESDs (special taxing districts). Many our size and smaller have no EMS system and rely on the whim of private ambulance systems. Cost wise, Atascosa County is taking the lion's share of the cost of our system.

Medina County's EMS is paid for and operated by special taxing districts. That is a viable option but it costs a tax rate to the county citizens of 7 to 10 cents per 100. Wilson County has expanding ESDs (special taxing districts) that start at 10 cents per 100 (the maximum). Neither Wilson County nor Medina County puts money in the system. Special taxing districts are composed of commissioners who govern and are elected by the citizens in the district. Cities can also run their own EMS but I have not run across any small cities in rural counties like ours who do.

I hear many people say "you should put another EMS station ... here ... or there." Or, "It would be nice to have an EMS Station over in (blank) location. Sure, I agree that it would be great to add 3 or 4 more stations. But the cost is staggering. To set up a new EMS station it would be over a half – million dollars (each) the first year not counting the building cost. And, management / supervision is critical. The need for certification updates and qualified personnel is never ending. As I said last week the county EMS is costing the taxpayers about 6 – 6.5 cents per \$100. Of course, citizens anywhere in the county can start their own ESD. They can be defined by voter precinct, city limits, county precinct or any metes and bounds description. The Texas Health and Safety Code 775.013 explains this.

Therefore, I will focus my time on making sure we have the best EMS possible with the latest medicines, equipment and personnel. People's lives are at stake. Of course, as the county grows we will need to consider additional EMS resources, but it is my view that the cities will have to (continue to) step up and pay their fair share. It is also important that citizens understand that there is no bottomless pit of money at the county.

I hope my columns have helped to education the reader on the cost of maintaining an EMS for the care of our citizens.