

P.O. Box 788 • 110 N. Court St.
Heppner, OR 97836
(541) 676-2529



Matthew D. Jensen
County Administrator
mjensen@co.morrow.or.us

- PRESS RELEASE -

**Morrow County Statement on Status of Ambulance Services:
There will be no interruption of ambulance services.**

January 5, 2024

On December 13, 2023, Morrow County received from Morrow County Health District (MCHD) a notice that it will discontinue ambulance services effective midnight on March 12, 2024. MCHD also provided notice that it would no longer engage in the process of development of the new Ambulance Service Area Plan and Ordinance.

MCHD has advised the County that it was required to give notice since the proposed language for the ASA Plan includes language from the 1998 Plan, and repeated in the 2023 ASA Plan proposed by MCHD, that requires an ambulance service provider vacating its area to turnover their ambulances(s) and equipment for use by the recruited interim personnel until a replacement service can be established. MCHD vigorously objects to this provision.

Accordingly, Morrow County will be obtaining interim services, if necessary, to continue ambulance services at the present levels during such time. Replacement ambulances have been secured. There will be no interruption of ambulance services. MCHD is allowed to keep its publicly paid for ambulances, rather than allow their interim use by the County or other another public entity.

Regarding the public process, Morrow County has held four public meetings to receive input on a new ASA Plan, has reached out to MCHD for responses and comment on specific issues, provided MCHD with drafts of the Ordinance and ASA Plan on October 21, 2023, and has incorporated many of the suggestions received from MCHD. MCHD is now providing a fresh round of review and objects to language it has previously drafted and proposed. MCHD now demands the right to approve the language of the ASA Plan and Ordinance, i.e., control with veto power over the ASA Plan and Ordinance. That legal obligation is the County's obligation, not MCHD's, and the County will make decisions it believes are best for the citizens of Morrow County.

MCHD has also made it clear that it is losing money on the provision of ambulance services, but nevertheless, has taken the position that it will provide ambulance services for the whole county or none at all. MCHD has also advised that it will be demanding a subsidy from the County.

MCHD's current objections and allegations of bad faith regarding the repeal of the 1998 ASA Plan are surprising, given that the County is required to repeal that Ordinance and Plan in order to implement the new Ordinance and ASA Plan. MCHD has been advised from the beginning of that requirement and was provided with the Draft Ordinance on October 21, 2023. There was no objection at that time.

Morrow County will proceed with its efforts to develop the new ASA Plan and is disappointed in the actions and refusal of MCHD to be constructively involved in that process.

Please direct inquiries to:

Matthew Jensen, Administrator
(541) 676-2529