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CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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WHO TO CALL FOR LIFT ASSISTANCE

Resources available to citizens for non-emergency needs

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The Muscatine Fire Department currently provides a valuable service for Muscatine and area residents, providing both fire protection and an advanced life support ambulance service. This double service by a group of men and women dedicated to public service is not easy and not all are cut out for being both a fire fighter and a paramedic.

The missions that this group of public servants conduct on a daily basis are more than putting out fires that threaten our homes and businesses, they also rescue victims from a variety of disasters, transport the ailing, perform life-extending and life-saving techniques, and put in countless hours of training.

“Customer service is one of our core values,” Jerry Ewers, Muscatine Fire Chief, said. “The ambulance service is a business. We respond when requested and assist the caller with appropriate resources if it is not an emergency.”

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) does respond to both emergency and non-emergency calls. However, one of those non-emergency calls, lift assist, has become so numerous that a lift-assist fee was added in July 2017, a common practice among fire based EMS services.

“The reason we implemented this lift assist fee was due to the fact that we had several residents that would call 9-1-1 for lift assist 30-60 times a year,” Ewers said. “They were not injured and just needed help up. This is not what the 9-1-1 system was designed for.”

Emergency services is provided for emergencies, illnesses, and injuries the Muscatine City Council was told at a July 2017 meeting to discuss the new fee structure. During a calendar year the Fire Department responds to four lift assist requests free of charge according to the fee structure with each response after the fourth request charged \$200.

Ewers also noted that the Fire Department will reach out to the callers after the second lift assist with a phone call, visit to the home, and-or a letter explaining the policy. The department also created a resource sheet to help citizens with non-emergency needs such as lift assists including life-line resources, community services, and durable medical equipment. The idea is to give the caller and family the appropriate tools and resources to help them out when it does not meet the criteria for calling 9-1-1.

“We encourage the citizen to utilize family, friends, neighbors, and church members among others to assist them when it is not an injury or illness,” Ewers said.

The fire chief said that the department will not refuse a lift assist request but with the limited resources available during a given shift, the call for a lift assist may delay response to a situation where an ambulance or a fire truck is truly needed. This is what we are trying to avoid.