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## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 9, 2023

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## Solutions to EMS Issues Being Considered

With the loss of ambulance service in Northern Inyo County looming, the County of Inyo and City of Bishop are continuing to collaborate on both short- and long-term solutions, with the aid of the Bishop Rural Fire Protection District.

Symons Emergency Services gave notice to the Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency (ICEMA) in January that it plans to cease providing Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance services in the Exclusive Operating Area (EOA), which encompasses the greater Bishop area, effective April 22, 2023. Symons, which has provided service in the area since 1989, cited unsustainable financial losses as the reason for the company ceasing operations in Bishop.

The City and County are deeply appreciative of Symons' decades of service and are actively working to identify ways to avoid a gap in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), including the hiring of a private company to provide EMS until a long-term replacement is found.

To that end, the Inyo County Health & Human Services has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for short-term EMS in the greater Bishop area. The deadline for submissions is 5 p.m. Monday, March 20. The RFP can be found at <https://www.inyocounty.us/services/county-administrators-office/bid-request-rfp>. A potential candidate has indicated the firm will be able to respond to the RFP by April 22. With time being of the essence, the City and County are also looking at interim solutions, should the contracting process take longer than April 22.

The agencies are coordinating with ICEMA, which has the oversight and ultimate authority to approve EMS providers' operation in the area. Access to effective and reliable EMS throughout Inyo County has been an intermittent topic of concern for many years. The majority of the County relies on volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), working under local fire departments, to deliver Basic Life Support (BLS) service. In the greater Bishop area, Symons Ambulance has employed a combination of Paramedics and EMTs in order to deliver ALS. The City of Bishop's and County of Inyo's primary objective is to ensure that there is continuity in ambulance service beyond Symons' last day of operation.

EMS challenges are widespread across the nation, particularly in rural areas like Inyo County. A general shortage of individuals interested in becoming paramedics or EMTs, stringent and cost-prohibitive training requirements, lack of qualified candidates, and high turnover have all been cited as contributing to the nationwide shortage of EMS

responders. Private ambulance companies like Symons are similarly plagued by shortages as well as low Medicare reimbursement rates that prevent them from recouping costs.

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