

Strafford First Aid Squad (FAST)

Brief history: Formed in the 1970's. Members required to have or obtain at minimum, CPR and advanced first aid certification. No reporting to St. of VT. There were 12 - 20 members with very variable attendance.

Presently there are 7 members, VT state licensure and certification requirements. All members are expected to respond to every call if they can, but the reality today is that several, sometimes all members, are out of range at any given time. All of us are NREMT (National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians) certified at one level or another, with a State of Vermont license to practice. This requirement helps provide a standard scope of practice, but the hours of education make it harder to recruit new members.

How Response Works: 911 calls are relayed to Hanover Dispatch, who "tones" out Strafford Fast Squad and Upper Valley Ambulance at the same time. Like most small squads we are not licensed to transport patients because buying, equipping and staffing an ambulance is a very expensive proposition for any small town. The ambulance is always dispatched when we are to save precious time if they are needed. We can turn them around if they truly are not needed, but not until we have evaluated the patient.

What the Fast Squad Can Do: We can extricate and treat traumatic injuries, evaluate and protect patients with medical emergencies, do CPR, give a few rescue meds including oxygen, and help you take your own prescribed meds, check blood sugar, and relay information to the arriving ambulance. Our biggest goal is patient safety, followed by decreasing the time required to get a patient into the ambulance and on the way to definitive care. We also can help you up after a fall even if you're not broken. And we are really good at hand holding while we wait.

What the Fast Squad Cannot do: We cannot respond to an individual request for "just you, I don't want the ambulance". If we are not "toned" we are only responding as a friend or family member, not as Fast Squad, and therefore have no liability insurance and no, quite possibly needed, backup on the way. If you truly need emergency help, you should not be wasting time calling someone you may or may not reach. You should not be wasting time before getting an ambulance on the road.

We cannot force you to be transported against your will. A law enforcement officer can, if you are deemed to be a risk to yourself or others. We also cannot leave you in an unsafe place, so you may be stuck with our company for a while!

If you decide to decline transport we have you sign a statement to that effect, and that we have explained the possible consequences. This is a mutual decision between patient and responders, and is a fairly common occurrence. If the ambulance has arrived on scene they will also have you sign a release.

We do not carry a "pharmacy" with us, and cannot prescribe meds.

If we put you on supplemental oxygen and it makes you feel better, we can't just leave it with you and go on our way. (Yes, we have had that request!).