

Category 10: External Systems Relationships

An agency's external relationships are defined as those relationships which serve to integrate the performance of one system with another. The increased use of multiunit systems and the increase of interagency agreements between various types of government entities necessitate regular attention to these relationships and the agreements between autonomous operating units. Agreements must be legally adopted, current, monitored and updated within the accrediting period. Programs that rely on support from external system relationships to meet agency expectations must be referenced in the agreement.

Criterion 10A: External Agency Relationships

The agency's operations and planning efforts include relationships with external agencies and operational systems that affect or may influence its mission, operations and/or cost effectiveness.

Summary:

The Meridian Fire Department actively cultivates diverse relationships and partnerships with numerous agencies and organizations. These collaborations are integral to achieving the department's mission, optimizing its operations, and enhancing cost effectiveness. Each partnership contributes essential resources that bolster the department's overall success. To ensure clarity and accountability, the department has established processes and procedures, including written agreements when necessary, to document the terms and conditions of services provided by these agencies and organizations. This approach allows for effective management and utilization of the received resources. The department's membership in the Ada County/City Emergency Services System (ACCESS) Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) serves as the primary means to bolster the department's mission to provide compassionate care for its community.

Performance Indicators:

CC 10A.1 The agency develops and maintains external relationships that support its mission, operations, and/or cost-effectiveness.

Description

The department is a founding member of the Ada County/City Emergency Services System (ACCESS) Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), which is a cooperative agreement between all Ada County fire agencies and Ada County Paramedics to operate under a shared medical license, medical directorate, and standing written orders (SWOs), to optimize patient care, provide for better working relationships between agencies, and share resources. Through the ACCESS JPA the department shares a license for its patient medical record reporting software, shares costs of a medical director, acts on committees to help update SWOs and provide training, and shares the cost of medical supplies and a quality assurance program. The department is also a member of the Ada County/City Emergency Management (ACCEM) group which provides for coordinated disaster and emergency planning across Ada county agencies. This relationship allows all agencies to more easily pool resources in the event of a disaster, as well as standardizes incident management responsibilities following the National Incident Management System model. The department also is part of the Emergency Systems (ES) Users group which includes all fire, law, and EMS agencies in the county that use the Ada County Sheriff's Office 911 Emergency Dispatch Center (dispatch). This group helps manage dispatch and automatic aid protocols, as well as determines resource lists for different types of emergencies in the county.

Appraisal

The department has been a part of ACCESS, ACCEM, and the ES Users group for over a decade each. The JPA agreement with ACCESS has provided a financial benefit to the department and the city with the cost sharing of significant resources such as medical supplies and a medical director. The ES Users group has allowed all area departments to operate based on automatic vehicle locators rather than defined response districts, resulting in better service and response to emergencies. The ACCEM council has allowed for the valley to operate off of the same playbook for disasters, creating a stronger, more

integrated response model than if each agency maintained their own individual response plans. The department, along with other county agencies, has recognized that due to the significant growth of the area that all departments and cities must act together to provide services to an entire county. Through partnerships both in ACCESS and the ES Users group, the department has joined a joint purchasing effort to install station pre-alerting into all stations in the next few years.

Plan

The deputy chief of administration will continue to be responsible for managing the external relationships fostered through the department's membership in ACCESS, ACCEM, and the ES Users group. The deputy chief of administration will assign committee responsibilities to various personnel (e.g., the division chief of EMS will sit on the ACCESS SWO and training committees). The department will continue to participate in emergency planning meetings through ACCEM. The department will work with ACCESS partners and the ES Users group to purchase and install station pre-alerting systems into all new stations, and retrofit existing stations in the next 3-5 years.

References

- ACCEM Executive Council Meeting Packet
- ACCESS Joint Powers Agreement
- ES Users Meeting Minutes, May 2023
- Bryx Station Pre-Alerting Email

10A.2 The agency's strategic plan identifies relationships with external agencies/systems and outlines a process to identify any impact or benefit to the agency's mission, operations or cost-effectiveness.

Description

The *Meridian Fire Department Strategic Plan 2022-2024* identifies optimizing partnership agreements as a key goal and objective. Goal 3A is to optimize partnership agreements that result in achieving the highest level of response capability for the MFD community. The five objectives listed within the goal outline the process the improve, maintain, or foster new relationships.

Appraisal

During the annual strategic plan review meeting, progress was noted on four of the five objectives under goal 3A. One objective was noted in the Strategic Plan Workplan as being overly broad and will be redefined for future plans. As part of the plan, the department has reviewed all contract agreements with its Ada County/City Emergency Services (ACCESS) Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) partners, has worked with Ada County Paramedics in the construction of two new fire stations to co-house ambulances, approved the implementation of Emergency Fire Dispatching protocols for Ada County Sheriff's Office 911 Emergency Dispatch Center (Dispatch), and has participated in new valley-wide battalion chief meetings to improve interoperability. The department has also created a deputy chief of administration position in early 2023 with a primary responsibility of managing the department's partnerships and relationships. The department is also working with Dispatch and other emergency services agencies to purchase and install station pre-altering systems into stations.

Plan

Members of the strategic planning committee, including executive staff, will meet at least annually to update and review the progress of the strategic plan. The department will evaluate the progress of goal 3A at the conclusion of 2024 and consider how to update it for the next strategic plan.

References

- *Meridian Fire Department Strategic Plan 2022-2024*, pg. 26
- Strategic Plan 2022-2024 Workplan
- Deputy Chief of Administration Job Description

10A.3 The agency researches, evaluates and considers all types of functional relationships that may aid in the achievement of its goals and objectives.

Description

The department actively investigates partnerships that will enhance its mission and vision. The department’s public education program partners with the Idaho Transportation Department to provide free car seats and installations to low income families. The department also works with other Ada County police, fire, and EMS agencies to drill on Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER) events.

Appraisal

In 2022, the department conducted over 300 car seat checks and provided 62 free car seats to families in need. The department took part in a valley-wide ASHER drill hosted by Hands on Training LLC to test its response model. The drill generated an After-Action Report (AAR) that is being used to modify and improve response protocols. In 2022 the division chief of EMS also began investigating the possibility of partnering with a local area medical group to provide mobile integrated healthcare and patient management for low-acuity patients requiring lifting assistance, medication management, or long-term medical management.

Plan

The department will continue to certify all new line personnel as car seat technicians and work with the Idaho Transportation Department to continue its car seat program. The department will continue to evaluate the Ada County Emergency Management’s ASHER protocols using the AAR as a guideline. The division chief of EMS will develop a proposal for a mobile integrated healthcare partnership in the next year.

References

- Car Seat Inspection Report 2022
- ASHER AAR

10A.4 A conflict resolution process exists between all external organizations with whom the agency has a defined relationship.

Description

The Ada County/City Emergency Services System (ACCESS) Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) contains articles that outline how to withdraw from the JPA agreement, how complaints against parties are handled, how parties may terminate certain agreements, and how amendments are made. The JPA also outlines how the board is elected and governed. Together, these constitute conflict resolution procedures for the variety of situations the ACCESS JPA may encounter. The ACCESS JPA also governs the ACCESS Standing Written Orders, which contain protocol G-06 Pre-hospital Integration of Care. This protocol outlines how different emergency response agencies interact and includes a conflict resolution process for patient care disagreements. The Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters IAFF Local 4627 contains a grievance procedure that outlines how to resolve issues with contract language interpretation.

Appraisal

The ACCESS JPA contract has outlined an effective system of management for all partner agencies to work under. The ACCESS board has provided oversight to all partner agencies and resolved any conflicts or issues that have arisen. The ACCESS SWO for pre-hospital integration of care has strengthened relationships between emergency agencies and provided better guidance for crews on emergency scenes.

Plan

The department will continue to follow the ACCESS JPA contract and resolve issues using outlined procedures. The department's providers will use ACCESS SWO G-06 to resolve any conflicts with patient care. The deputy chief of administration will examine other contracts, including the contract for services with Ada County Sheriff's Office 911 Emergency Dispatch Center (Dispatch) and the Meridian Rural Fire District, as they are renewed to determine if a conflict resolution process is needed.

References

- ACCESS Joint Powers Agreement, pg. 4-10
- Collective Labor Agreement between City of Meridian and Meridian Firefighters
IAFF Local 4627, Article 16, pg. 17-20
- SWO G06 Pre-Hospital Integration of Care Protocol

Criterion 10B: External Agency Agreements

The agency maintains current agreements with those external agencies which support the identified programs. All external agency agreements required to be maintained in support of any program must be current, reviewed, and/or updated within the accreditation period and adopted by the appropriate governing bodies. All agreements should support the agency's effort to take advantage of any operational and cost-effective benefits. Data reports, at least annually, should reflect the impact of each agreement on the agency.

Summary:

The department is part of the Ada County/City Emergency Services System (ACCESS) Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). The JPA is a cooperative partnership with all Ada county fire and EMS agencies to create a unified response system to medical emergencies, manage standing written orders, share costs, and ultimately provide a superior response to the public. The JPA contract is renewed annually. The department also maintains current agreements with Ada County Sheriff's Office 911 Emergency Dispatch Center (Dispatch) and the Meridian Rural Fire District. The department uses dispatch as a shared resource with all other Ada county EMS agencies which allows for better information sharing, interoperability, automatic aid, and cost effectiveness. The department provides emergency response service to the Meridian Rural Fire District and the district contributes to the fire department's budget.

Performance Indicators:

CC 10B.1 External agency agreements are reviewed every three years and revised as necessary to meet objectives.

Description

The department's administrative services division manager is responsible for maintaining all contract records and notifying the appropriate department staff when contracts and agreements are up for review. Most contracts are reviewed, updated, and renewed annually. Some contracts have terms of 2-3 years and are reviewed regularly and updated as necessary when the contract is reviewed. The department utilizes *Municode* as a tool for managing contract reviews, updates, revisions, and signatures. The administrative services division manager actively monitors the *Municode* workflow to ensure that contracts are being handled promptly and efficiently.

Appraisal

The administrative services division manager created a new contract tracking worksheet in 2022 track each contract's lifespan, and is responsible for monitoring a contract's renewal progress once it is placed in the workflow in *Municode*. All contracts currently managed by the administrative division have been reviewed and updated at least every three years, or sooner depending on the terms of the contract.

Plan

The administrative services division manager and the deputy chief of administration will work to manage all current contracts using the contract tracking worksheet. The administrative division will work to bring more contracts into the worksheet, including vendor and logistical contracts. All contracts will be reviewed and updated at least every three years.

References

- Contract Tracking Worksheet
- *Municode* Workflow Screenshot

10B.2 The agency has a process to manage, review and, if needed, revise agreements.

Description

The department and the city use *Municode* to manage contract reviews, updates, revisions, and signatures. *Municode* provides a workflow so contracts can be seamless updated, reviewed by city legal, adjustments made, and signed by the appropriate parties, and sent to city council for approval. The administrative services division manager monitors the *Municode* workflow to ensure contracts are being handled in a timely manner.

Appraisal

The *Municode* workflow management system has been effective for the city and the department. All contracts and agreements have been updated, reviewed, approved by the city’s legal department, and signed by the appropriate parties.

Plan

The department will continue to use the *Municode* system to manage, review, and revise its contract agreements.

References

- *Municode* Workflow Screenshot

10B.3 The agency evaluates external agency performance annually to ensure that external agencies are capable and effective in supporting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

The department is a member of the Emergency Services (ES) Users committee, which is responsible for regularly reviewing automatic aid, fire response lists (FRLs), and dispatch protocols that pertain to fire and EMS response. The ES Users committee meets monthly to review any proposed changes to dispatch protocols or FRLs based on performance. Any proposed changes to FRLs must be submitted using a change request form and must be approved by all ES Users committee members. FRLs are reviewed and updated if needed at monthly ES Users meetings.

Appraisal

The ES Users committee has modified FRLs and dispatch protocols several times based on performance data. For example, the Meridian Fire Department previously provided two fire engines, a truck and a battalion chief to all reported structure fires in neighboring Kuna Rural Fire District. However, since Kuna only has a single fire engine and many reported structure fires are false alarms, the FRL dispatch list for a structure fire in Kuna was modified to send only an engine and a battalion chief from Meridian, with other units available for request if needed. This change ensured that Meridian's units were not being drawn into a neighboring district unnecessarily.

Plan

The department is currently building two new fire stations, both of which are located on the outer edges of the department's response area, and have an increased potential to run automatic and mutual aid calls in neighboring fire districts or even across county lines. The department will analyze the performance and use of the apparatus housed at the new stations following their opening to determine if any changes to FRLs or dispatch protocols are needed to keep apparatus reliability high in the Meridian response area.

References

- ES Users Agenda
- ES Users Meeting Minutes, May 2023

- Ada County Fire Response Lists
- Ada County Emergency Communications Change Request Form