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Emergency Techs Scramble To Help Fill Their Thin Ranks

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A group representing emergency medical technicians is launching a campaign to recruit new workers to meet the needs of community ambulance programs in Wisconsin.

"Typically, communities are struggling to have two or more people on call at all times because it's hard finding volunteers," said Don Hunjadi, executive director of the Wisconsin EMS Association. "Our problem is that most people don't know there's a shortage and the average person doesn't think they can handle the work."

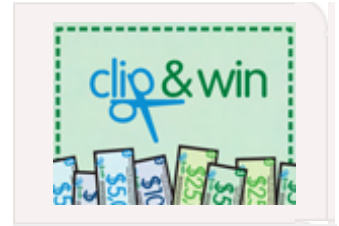
The group's campaign is aimed at signing up at least 500 new members to help towns, villages and cities staffed by volunteer departments.

As part of the effort, communities will open ambulance stations to visitors and stage various attractions, including pig roasts and simulated car accidents.

The state has about 16,000 EMTs, but Hunjadi said recruiting volunteers has gotten more difficult because work schedules, family activities and outside interests keep people from making a commitment.

"There are 425 ambulance providers in the state, and I would estimate at least half of them need more volunteers," he said.

Elke Hoffmann, captain of EMTs for the Cedarburg Fire Department, said an upcoming recruiting session is designed to attract volunteers of all sorts, not just those trained as EMTs.



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