

## EXCLUSIVE: Private Ambulance Company Pulls Out Of City Of Milwaukee, Leaving "Great Hole" In City 911 Service

By Mark Belling, WISN-AM

One of Milwaukee's largest private ambulance companies is pulling out of its contract to provide service for 911 calls in the city. Paratech Ambulance is one of three companies that share ambulance duties in the city, along with the Milwaukee Fire Department which handles life-threatening 911 calls.

Paratech is owned by a Milwaukee firm named Midwest Medical. Its officials are not responding to questions about why they are bailing out of the contract. Milwaukee Alderman Michael Murphy, who has been on the common council for decades, says Paratech's decision could leave a "great hole in the city's emergency services." As it is, callers with non-life threatening conditions have reported long waits for service. Some private ambulance companies have complained that their personnel have been threatened when they respond to calls but it's hard to say if that has anything to do with Paratech's decision.

Paratech is giving the city 180 days notice of its intention to terminate the contract. It's possible this is all a negotiating ploy. City insiders tell me Paratech and other ambulance providers claim they are losing money on low income patients because Medicaid reimbursements don't cover costs. The companies make their profit off of individuals with private insurance. The three companies that divide the city have different regions and all have some low income neighborhoods. Paratech may be seeking a higher reimbursement from the city. The other two companies, Bell and Curtis, could theoretically join Paratech in threatening to bail out.

If the situation isn't resolved, there will be simply be more calls for ambulance service than ambulance providers and crews available.

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