

Franz Valley EMS Challenges_July 15 2026_NoSoCoFPD Board meeting

TO: Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District Board of Directors
FROM: "Friends of Franz Valley" (comprising FV Mothers Club; COPE; FV GMRS Network)
RE: Inadequacy of Coastal Valleys EMS Agency / Bell's Ambulance / EOA-2 service to Franz Valley

Thank you for allowing Friends of Franz Valley to submit this item regarding the July 14, 2026, EMS response to a medical emergency on Franz Valley Road, near the Franz Valley School Road intersection. If the cardiac incident had been more serious, the outcome could have been tragic due to EMS delays every step of the way.

Accompanying this note is a letter written by Valerie Swisher, whose chest pains prompted a 9 1 1 call at 4:30 a.m. on Tuesday / July 14. The experience that followed concerned us all not only for the peril to her health but also because (1) Val leads multiple FV initiatives including COPE; our Fire Danger Signs installation and maintenance; GroupMe emergency alerts; and Red Flag distribution.

Appointed our "Mayor of Fire Town," Valerie has not paused her work for us, even while in the midst of an arduous battle against cancer, including current chemotherapy. So, we feel protective.

But, her experience symbolizes the reality of Franz Valley residents' vulnerability to serious EMS delays, particularly the EMT-staffed ambulances coming from Healdsburg whose crews are unfamiliar with Franz Valley Road and Franz Valley School Road, and the routes to Napa County and Santa Rosa.

Moreover, our medical emergency delays begin as soon as we call 9 1 1 with its own delays in transferring calls to REDCOM or Sonoma County Sheriff Dispatch or even CHP.

(This is where I must add compliments to NoSoCoFPD, Chief Marshall Turbeville and his firefighters; the administration; and this Board and NoSoCo Fire Foundation since they / you always have our backs. Moreover, commitment to self-reliance has produced one of the County's largest, active GMRS Networks and GroupMe text alert systems.)

I tried to get a quick education on the contract(s) signed by Coastal Valleys EMS Agency that placed Franz Valley in the County's EOA-2, with service assigned to Bell's Ambulance. (HS 1797.6) The contract's Geographic Description is actually vague as to the "Subarea's" south and east borders; Franz Valley is not mentioned in that service area.

Moreover, I was shocked to see that Bell's Ambulance is "granted" a standard 30- to 33-minute standard response time to our "sub-area."

The nightmare of the "wayward" route as described by Valerie should never have happened, as the 2024 EMS Plan clearly states spells out the knowledge and training that every EMT must have about the rural roads of Sonoma County. Standard communications and redundancies are also defined.

Valerie's account of that "drive" and the "lack of cell service" leaves much concern for oversight of Bell's ambulance and Coastal Valleys EMS Agency.

Because there is a contract with Calistoga Fire to serve as an EMS first responder, we request that studies be conducted to ascertain the feasibility of also contracting with Napa County's AMR, located in Calistoga.

The financial and "political" considerations may be extreme, but the risks outweigh, we believe the bureaucratic complications.

Our balkanized valley – divided by two Counties; two Fire Protection Districts; two Air Quality Control Districts; two County Supervisor Districts; two school Districts; and two Congressional Districts (I may have missed something) – create challenges, but we make it work by investing in our Valley and trusting each other. And we ask that we have guidance as to how to make changes in who might come after we call 9 1 1.

Thank you for your service and consideration.

Nancy Graalman
On behalf of
Friends of Franz Valley