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Down East ambulance service to close after 60 years

by Marie Weidmayer

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A volunteer ambulance service in Down East Maine is closing after 60 years, and it's unclear who will cover the communities losing aid.

Dennys River Volunteer Ambulance service will close Nov. 30, Capt. Wayne Seeley said. Seeley, who is in his 80s, runs the service alongside his wife, Roberta. The EMS provider has struggled for years to find volunteers, he told the Bangor Daily News.

It covers the towns of Dennysville and Pembroke, and the unorganized townships of Cathance, Edmunds and Marion.

The ambulance service closing in rural Washington County will likely exacerbate the area's already in emergency coverage. This comes just over a month after the **BDN reported** on how Maine has failed for years to ensure residents have EMS coverage, especially in rural areas. That failure has left ambulances on the



financial brink and risks longer wait times for Mainers experiencing medical emergencies.

The municipalities have just over a month to figure out who will provide EMS to residents. **Maine law does not require the service** be provided. The BDN could not reach Dennysville and Pembroke clerks on Tuesday.

The EMS runs with only four to six volunteers, which means they can't provide 24 hour coverage, Seeley said. For years it has tried to get more volunteers, but no one was willing to take the unpaid positions, he said. The closure coincides with the service's license expiring in late November.

"It feels horrible, terrible," Seeley said. "One of the worst things I've ever had to do. I really enjoyed doing it, but I guess there comes a time that you have to stop."

Dennys River runs around 100 to 150 calls a year, Seeley said. They weren't enough to generate revenue and pay people, he said.

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Downeast EMS covers calls that Dennys River is unable to go to, Seeley said. The **quasi municipal ambulance service** is aware of the pending closure, a staff member told the BDN. Downeast's **service director** did not immediately respond to request for comment.



Nearby townships are serviced by Downeast EMS and Pleasant River Ambulance Service, according to coverage map in **Washington County's unorganized territories**.

Maine EMS Director Wil O'Neal and Unorganized Territories Administrator Heron Weston did not immediately respond to requests for comment.



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