

History of Putnam County EMS

Formation and Early Years (1974)

Putnam County EMS was established in **1974** as a countywide volunteer emergency medical service. The organization was created during a period when EMS systems across Ohio were transitioning from basic ambulance transportation services to structured prehospital emergency medical care. Initially, all staffing was volunteer, and local communities supplied personnel who responded from their homes, workplaces, or fire stations.

The volunteer model became the foundation of emergency medical care throughout Putnam County and remains an important component of the system today.

Growth of the Volunteer Squad System

Over time, seven volunteer EMS districts developed across the county. The countywide system was organized around community-based squads that provided emergency response and ambulance transport within their local response areas. Public sources confirm seven volunteer squads served the county.

These districts have traditionally been associated with the major communities of:

- Ottawa-Glandorf
- Kalida
- Leipsic
- Continental
- Columbus Grove
- Pandora
- Ottoville

Many EMS members also served as firefighters, creating a strong partnership between local fire departments and EMS operations throughout the county. Fire stations frequently housed ambulances and provided facilities for EMS training and response activities.

Volunteer Leadership Tradition

One of the distinguishing features of Putnam County EMS has been its reliance on local leadership. Squad captains, lieutenants, training officers, and EMS chiefs were traditionally volunteers who balanced emergency response responsibilities with full-time careers in farming, education, manufacturing, healthcare, and local business.

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, these volunteer leaders:

- Recruited new EMTs and paramedics.
- Organized training programs.
- Raised funds through community events.
- Purchased equipment through local donations and grants.
- Maintained ambulance stations and apparatus.
- Developed mutual-aid relationships with neighboring departments.

Advancement of EMS Training

As EMS standards evolved nationwide, Putnam County volunteers advanced from basic first-aid and ambulance operations to:

- EMT certification
- Advanced EMT certification
- Paramedic-level care
- Technical rescue response capabilities

The county established formal training programs to maintain state certification requirements and improve patient care capabilities. Today, the Office of Public Safety continues to support countywide EMS training and exercises.

Major Milestone: Passage of the EMS Levy (2014)

A significant turning point occurred in **2014**, when Putnam County voters approved an EMS levy to strengthen emergency medical services countywide. The levy funded the establishment of dedicated full-time Advanced Life Support coverage.

This expansion recognized a challenge faced by many rural EMS agencies: maintaining volunteer staffing during daytime hours when members were working outside their communities.

Creation of Full-Time ALS Response

Following the levy's approval:

- **Medic 300** was established as a county ALS supervisory and response unit.
- **Unit 301** was added to strengthen emergency response capabilities.
- Full-time personnel began assisting volunteer squads throughout the county.
- County EMS expanded interfacility transport services.

This hybrid model combined the strengths of volunteer responders with professional county-funded ALS resources.

Expansion of County Public Safety Operations

In later years, EMS operations became integrated within the **Putnam County Office of Public Safety (PCOPS)** alongside:

- Emergency Management Agency functions.
- Hazardous Materials response.
- Technical rescue capabilities.
- Disaster preparedness planning. [\[pcops.org\]](https://pcops.org)

This integration improved coordination during large-scale emergencies and disasters.

50-Year Anniversary (2024)

In 2024, local EMS organizations celebrated **50 years of Putnam County EMS**, marking the organization's founding in 1974. Public announcements advertised open house activities and community events commemorating the milestone.

Current System

Today, Putnam County EMS operates as a blend of:

- Volunteer EMS squads.
- County ALS resources.
- EMS transport services.
- Ambulette transportation services.
- Emergency management partnerships.

The system remains rooted in the volunteer tradition established in 1974 while incorporating modern ALS response, training, communications, and countywide coordination.

Significant Milestones Timeline

Year	Milestone
1974	Putnam County EMS established as an all-volunteer organization.

1970s-1980s	Community-based volunteer squads expand throughout the county.
1990s-2000s	Increased EMT, AEMT, and paramedic capabilities throughout the system.
2014	County voters approve EMS levy.
2014	Medic 300 and Unit 301 established to provide full-time ALS response and support volunteer squads.
2024	Putnam County EMS celebrates 50 years of service.
2026	New EMS building 14000 square feet. Living quarters, dayroom, kitchen, work out room, offices, training room, bed rooms.