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# Medstar: Help Is on the Way, and in Record Time

## Once-troubled ambulance service celebrates best response times ever

By [SCOTT GORDON](#)

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[Fort Worth](#)'s ambulance service Medstar responded to emergency calls in record time in July, a remarkable accomplishment that signals a turnaround of its troubled past.

In July, the average response time for the highest-priority calls was 5 minutes and 32 seconds -- the best in Medstar's history and a dramatic drop from the nearly seven minutes for the same month two years ago.

Even more impressive, the record comes in one of the busiest periods of the year and as the overall number of calls has increased with [Tarrant County](#)'s growing population.

Just a few years ago, the ambulance service seemed in need of help itself.

Medstar Racks Up Record Response Times



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## Medstar Racks Up Record Response Times

At one point, response times were so poor -- and staffing levels so low -- firefighters had to help out making ambulance calls.

About 15 months ago, Medstar increased salaries. Staffing is up 26 percent this year, and the constant turnover that plagued the service is now gone.

"Our retention is better than it's ever been," said Medstar's new operations director, [Matt Zavadsky](#). "Our recruitment efforts have been very fruitful. We're averaging four and a half applicants a day&hellip; so we have the pick of the cream of the crop."

Medstar serves Fort Worth and 14 smaller cities over 421 square miles in Tarrant County. Its ambulances race to about 100,000 calls a year.

More crews on the street helps, but Medstar managers have also worked to better deploy them to areas with the highest volume of calls.

"EMS calls are very predictable," Zavadsky said. "We can pretty much tell you by hour of the day and day of the week where calls will occur and how many will occur."

And with the number of calls expected to decline at the end of the summer, Zavadsky predicted more record low response times.

"(We'll) definitely have more record months ahead," he said.

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