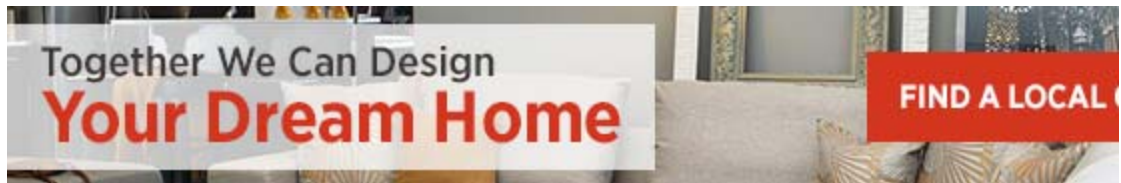




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## 10 Investigates: Proposed EMS cuts in Pinellas increased response time

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St. Petersburg, Florida -- If you live in Pinellas County, expect it to take longer for an EMS vehicle to come to your aid if you call 911.

As 10 Investigates a county proposal to cut funding, we have found even those behind the Pinellas cuts admit response time will increase. The big question is how much the response time will increase.

Most people don't think about EMS response time until they need help. However if they are chronically ill with a debilitating disease like Paula and Jim Diviney, being able to count on EMS getting their quickly is always top of mind.

"We rely on emergency response," Jim Diviney says.

But a county proposal calls for funding cutbacks from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. in EMS Units in service and paramedics on duty. The cuts are slated to come in five of Pinellas County's most populated and busiest cities: Clearwater, Largo, Lealman, Pinellas Park and St Petersburg.



Pinellas Emergency Services Manager Bruce Moeller says this is about money and the County is spending too much on emergency services. Moeller says the five departments slated for budget cuts can reduce units and the number of paramedics on duty from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. with no problem.

Lealman Fireboard member Kathleen Litton says with the domino effect of several calls there could be an increase in response times to critical levels. However, Moller believes the most response time will increase is 4 to 5 seconds.



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"If there is an issue that somehow arises that wasn't anticipated we will work quickly to correct it," Moeller added.

We asked if that means he has no concern about response time and Moeller told us, "No sir I do not."

However, in an emergency situation a response time that is one or two minutes more can mean the difference between life and death.

Paul Diviney knows, saying in the case of her husband, "He stops breathing and we have only a few moments."

And while these five cities can choose to fund the paramedics units through City funds, that would mean another tax for homeowners for the same service they are currently getting.

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