

Hardwick Rescue Squad: A Critical Investment in Rural Emergency Care

For nearly six decades, **Hardwick Rescue Squad (HRS)** has been a cornerstone of emergency medical care in northern Vermont. Founded in 1967, HRS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, largely volunteer ambulance service providing 24-hour emergency response to approximately 8,000 residents across eight rural towns in Caledonia, Lamoille, Orleans, and Washington Counties. Each year, more than 50 volunteer EMTs and drivers—supported by a small team of full-time and per-diem staff—contribute over 20,000 volunteer hours to ensure that help arrives when it is needed most. In 2025 the squad responded to 1,029 emergency calls—five times the volume anticipated when its current facility was built in 1982.

Demand for HRS services has grown dramatically. In 2025 alone, the squad responded to more than 1,000 emergency calls—nearly three times the volume anticipated when its current facility was built in 1982. What was once adequate for 20 volunteers and 200 calls per year is now a significant operational limitation. The existing two-bay building lacks sleeping quarters for overnight crews, has insufficient training and storage space, unreliable plumbing, and aging infrastructure that undermines volunteer retention and staff wellbeing. These constraints directly affect HRS’s ability to sustain a strong, ready workforce and to meet the community’s growing emergency medical needs.

To address these challenges and ensure long-term resilience, HRS is partnering with the Town of Hardwick on the development of a new Essential Services Complex on Creamery Road. This campus will relocate and modernize the Rescue Squad alongside the Fire Department and Highway Garage, strengthening coordination among essential services while moving critical infrastructure out of flood-prone areas. Extensive feasibility and scoping studies confirm that constructing a new facility on the existing site is the most responsible and cost-effective solution.

The new Hardwick Rescue facility will be purpose-built for modern emergency response. Plans include three ambulance bays, dedicated training and community education space, overnight sleeping quarters, shower and laundry facilities, and adequate storage for medical and rescue equipment. Designed with energy efficiency, durability, and community pride in mind, the building will support school visits, regional trainings, and public engagement—while also providing a safe, functional, and welcoming environment for the volunteers and staff who serve around the clock.

The total project cost is estimated at **\$4 million**. HRS has already committed \$1 million from its



capital construction fund and is actively pursuing grants and public funding. Private philanthropy is essential to completing this vision. Donor support will directly translate into stronger emergency response capacity, improved volunteer recruitment and retention, and a more resilient safety net for rural Vermont communities. Although the new facility will be part of the Hardwick Essential Services Complex, it is important to remember that HRS will remain a private non-profit 501c3 organization.