

**CHAPTER 11-28.3
RURAL AMBULANCE SERVICE DISTRICTS**

11-28.3-01. Territory to be organized - Petition.

Whenever twenty percent of the qualified electors, as determined by the vote cast in the last preceding gubernatorial election, residing in any rural territory, equivalent in area to one township or more not presently served by an existing emergency medical service, elect to form, organize, establish, equip, and maintain a rural ambulance service district, they shall signify their intention by presenting to the county auditor of the county or counties in which the territory is situated a petition setting forth the desires and purposes of the petitioners. The petition shall contain the full names and post-office addresses of the petitioners, the suggested name of the proposed district, the area in square miles [hectares] to be included therein, and a complete description according to government survey, wherever possible, of the boundaries of the real properties intended to be embraced in the proposed rural ambulance service district. A plat or map showing the suggested boundaries of the proposed district shall accompany the petition, and the petitioner shall also deposit with the county auditor a sum sufficient to defray the expense of publishing the notices required by sections 11-28.3-02 and 11-28.3-03. Provided further that any city located within the area, whether such city has emergency medical services or not, may be included in the rural ambulance district if twenty percent or more of the qualified electors residing in the city sign the petition.

11-28.3-02. Election in affected counties.

When a petition is filed in the office of the county auditor pursuant to section 11-28.3-01, the county auditor shall determine and certify that the petition has been signed by at least twenty percent of the qualified electors voting at the last general election for governor and residing within the boundaries of the proposed district. If the proposed district is situated within two or more counties, the county auditor of the county wherein most of the petitioners reside shall confer with the other affected county auditors for the purpose of determining the adequacy of the petitions in all the counties affected.

If the county auditor or county auditors determine that the petitions submitted are adequate according to the provisions of this chapter, the question of whether the rural ambulance service district shall be formed and organized shall be submitted to a vote of the qualified electors residing in the proposed district at the next ensuing countywide special, primary, or general election. The election provided for by this chapter shall be conducted in the same manner as other county elections are conducted, except as otherwise provided by this chapter.

11-28.3-03. Notice of election.

In addition to the usual requirements of notices of election, the notice for an election at which the question provided for in this chapter will be voted upon shall include a statement describing the boundaries of the proposed rural ambulance service district, expressed, wherever possible, in terms of the government survey, a statement setting forth a specified mill levy for the proposed district, which levy shall not exceed the limitation in section 11-28.3-09. The notice of election shall also state the voting areas in which the question provided by this chapter will be on the ballot.

11-28.3-04. Form of ballot - Vote required to approve.

The ballot on the question of forming a rural ambulance service district must be in substantially the following form:

Shall (name of taxing district or districts) levy a tax of not to exceed _____ mills for the purpose of forming a rural ambulance district?

Yes

No

If a majority of all the votes cast on the question of levying a tax and forming a rural ambulance service district are in favor of such a tax levy, then the formation of the district is approved.

11-28.3-05. Notice by county auditor of meeting to organize district.

If a rural ambulance service district is approved as provided in this chapter, the county auditor of the county in which the proposed district is located shall issue notice of a public meeting to organize the rural ambulance service district. The notice shall be given by publication once a week for two consecutive weeks, the last notice appearing seven days before the date of the meeting in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed district. The notice shall be addressed to all qualified electors residing within the boundaries of the district, shall describe the boundaries of the district, and shall state the date, time, and place of the meeting. If the district is located within two or more counties, the county auditors of the counties shall confer and set the date, time, and place of the meeting and shall cause the publication of the meeting notice in each of said counties.

11-28.3-06. Organization - Board of directors.

At the time and place fixed by the county auditor for the public meeting as provided in section 11-28.3-05, the qualified electors present who reside within the boundaries of the district shall proceed to organize the district. Permanent organization must be effected by the election of a board of directors consisting of not less than five nor more than ten residents of the district. The board of directors shall meet as soon after the organizational meeting as possible to elect a president, a vice president, and a secretary-treasurer. All directors and officers must be elected for two years and hold office until their successors have been elected and qualified, except that at the first election the vice president must be elected as provided in this section for a one-year term, and one-half, or as close to one-half as possible depending upon the total number of directors, of the directors elected at the first election after July 1, 1977, must be selected by lot in the presence of a majority of such directors to serve one-year terms. All officers and directors shall serve without pay.

11-28.3-07. Regular meeting to be held.

A regular meeting of the electors who reside within the boundaries of a district shall be held in the first quarter of each calendar year, and special meetings may be called by the board of directors at any time. The secretary-treasurer shall give notice of the meeting by one publication in a legal newspaper of general circulation in each county in which the district is situated. The meeting shall be held not less than seven nor more than fourteen days after the date of publication of the notice.

11-28.3-08. Powers of board of directors.

The board of directors shall have the following general powers to:

1. Develop a general emergency medical service program for the district.
2. Make an annual estimate of the probable expense of carrying out the program.
3. Annually certify that estimate to the proper county auditor in the manner provided by section 11-28.3-09.
4. Manage and conduct the business affairs of the district.
5. Make and execute contracts in the name of and on behalf of the district with regard to a general emergency medical service program.
6. Purchase or lease ambulances, or other emergency vehicles, supplies, and other real or personal property as shall be necessary and proper to carry out the general emergency medical service program of the district.
7. Incur indebtedness on behalf of the district within the limits prescribed by section 11-28.3-10, authorize the issuance of evidences of indebtedness permitted under section 11-28.3-10, and pledge any real or personal property owned or acquired by the district as security for the same.
8. Organize, establish, equip, maintain, and supervise an emergency medical service company to serve the district.
9. Generally perform all acts necessary to fully carry out the purposes of this chapter.

11-28.3-09. Emergency medical service policy - Levy - Financial Report.

The board of directors shall establish a general emergency medical service policy for the district and shall annually estimate the probable expense for carrying out that policy. The estimate shall be certified by the president and secretary to the proper county auditor or county auditors, on or before June thirtieth of each year. In the year for which the levy is sought, a board of directors of a rural ambulance service district seeking approval of a property tax levy under this chapter must file with the county auditor of the counties within the rural ambulance service district, at a time and in a format prescribed by the county auditors, a financial report for the preceding calendar year showing the ending balances of each fund held by the rural ambulance service district during that year. The board or boards of county commissioners may levy a tax not to exceed the mill rate approved by the electors of the district under section 11-28.3-04, and in no event exceeding a mill rate of ten mills upon the taxable property within the district for the maintenance of the rural ambulance service district for the fiscal year as provided by law. A rural ambulance service district may be dissolved by approval of electors of the district as provided in section 11-28.3-13.

The tax levied for a rural ambulance service district shall be:

1. Collected as other taxes are collected in the county.
2. Turned over to the secretary-treasurer of the rural ambulance service district, who shall be bonded in the amount of at least five thousand dollars.
3. Deposited by the secretary-treasurer in a state or national bank in a district account.
4. Paid out upon warrants drawn upon the district account by authority of the board of directors of the district, bearing the signature of the secretary-treasurer and the countersignature of the president.

In no case shall the amount of the tax levy exceed the amount of funds required to defray the expenses of the district for a period of one year as embraced in the annual estimate of expense, including the amount of principal and interest upon the indebtedness of the district for the ensuing year. The district may include in its operating budget no more than ten percent of its annual operating budget as a depreciation expense to be set aside in a dedicated emergency medical services sinking fund deposited with the treasurer for the replacement of equipment and ambulances. The ten percent emergency medical services sinking fund may be in addition to the actual annual operating budget, but the total of the annual operating budget and the annual ten percent emergency medical services sinking fund shall not exceed the amount of revenue that would be generated by application of the maximum mill levy approved by the electors.

11-28.3-10. Indebtedness of district limited.

No district shall become indebted for an amount that may not be payable from ninety percent of twenty times the current annual maximum tax levy as authorized by section 11-28.3-09. Within the limits herein authorized, the district may borrow money and issue appropriate evidence of indebtedness. No evidence of indebtedness issued under the provisions of this chapter and sold privately shall bear interest at a rate or rates and be sold at a price resulting in an average annual net interest cost higher than eight percent. There shall be no interest rate ceiling on those issues sold at public sale. No evidence of indebtedness issued under the provisions of this chapter shall be sold for less than ninety-eight percent of par value plus accrued interest, if any interest has accrued as of the date of delivery thereof.

11-28.3-11. Funds collected to be deposited.

All funds collected on behalf of the district through the levy of taxes, all donations, contributions, bequests, or annuities, and all borrowed money received by or on behalf of the district shall be deposited in a state or national bank to the credit of the district account and shall be drawn out only by warrant.

Claim vouchers shall be authorized by the board of directors and shall bear the signature of the secretary-treasurer and the countersignature of the president. The secretary-treasurer of the district shall, at each annual public meeting of the district, present a financial report concerning the affairs of the district.

11-28.3-12. Rural ambulance service district may enter into contract.

Any rural ambulance service district may enter into a contract with another rural ambulance service district to consolidate or cooperate for mutual ambulance services or emergency vehicle services, or may enter into a contract with any federal, state, or local government agency for ambulance services or emergency vehicle services, upon terms suitable to all concerned.

11-28.3-13. Boundaries of rural ambulance service district - Dissolution of the district.

The boundaries of any rural ambulance service district organized under the provisions of this chapter may be changed in the manner prescribed by sections 11-28.3-01 through 11-28.3-06, but a change in the boundary of a district does not impair or affect its organization or its right in or to property; nor does it impair, affect, or discharge any contract, obligation, lien, or charge for or upon which it might be liable had such change of boundaries not been made. When a boundary change is requested, the petition, notice of election, and ballot must all indicate that the purpose of the election is to alter the boundaries of an existing rural ambulance service district. The petition and notice of election must describe with particularity both the present and the proposed boundaries of the district.

Dissolution of a rural ambulance service district may be accomplished in the manner prescribed by sections 11-28.3-01 through 11-28.3-04. The petition and notice of election must state that the purpose of the election is to dissolve the rural ambulance service district and must describe its boundaries. The ballot to dissolve a rural ambulance service district must be in substantially the following form:

Shall (name of taxing district or districts) cease to levy a tax for the purpose of maintaining a rural ambulance service district, and shall such district be dissolved?

Yes

No

If a majority of all votes cast on the question are in favor of dissolution, then the district is dissolved thirty days after the canvass of the votes. After all debts and obligations of the district are paid, any remaining funds must be deposited in the general fund of the county in which the district was contained. If the dissolved district was located in more than one county, then any funds remaining after all debts and obligations are paid must be divided among those counties in the same proportion as the geographical area of the district in each county bears to the total geographical area of the dissolved district.

11-28.3-14. Payments by certain organizations.

Any property tax-exempt club, lodge, chapter, charitable home, dormitory, state or county fair association, or like organization located within a rural ambulance service district and outside the boundaries of any city shall pay to the board of directors of the district annually for emergency medical service an amount agreed upon, but not less than twenty-five percent of the amount which would be levied against the property under the provisions of this chapter if the property were subject to levy.

Funds derived from such payments shall be expended by the district for emergency medical service supplies and equipment and the training of emergency medical service personnel.