

IN AN EMERGENCY



JASON PLOTKIN — DAILY RECORD/SUNDAY NEWS

Volunteer District Fire Chief Paul Grubbs, right rear, and John Dommel, president of Grantley Fire and EMS, show off the sirens on a new ambulance in the Spring Garden Township fire house. Grantley EMS is becoming an advanced life support provider after WellSpan announced it would no longer staff local EMS companies with paramedics.

INTERNET BIZ

Sharing economy to drive changes

Policymakers must wrestle with health, taxation, safety and other issues

By Heather Somerville
San Jose Mercury News

Websites and applications that let consumers rent out their home or give a stranger a ride in their car for a few bucks will drive sweeping changes in public policy in the coming year as cities and states rethink how they govern the so-called sharing economy.

In the past year, sharing economy businesses have moved from the fringe to the mainstream. But 2014 will be the year policymakers and regulators decide how much freedom to give these companies, according to sharing economy leaders, academics and attorneys.

"Every city will be looking at its laws and reviewing them," said Janelle Orsi, an Oakland, Calif.-based attorney and director of the Sustainable Economies Law Center. "The dust is going to settle in the next year. A few cities have outright banned these companies, but they will rethink that."

The sharing economy refers broadly to companies, many of which make mobile apps, that provide services using things people already own, whether that's a car, home or the clothes in their closet. It gives service providers the opportunity make some extra cash as, for instance, an ad hoc taxi service, hotel, or home-cleaning service.

Until recently, these entrepreneurs have been operating largely unregulated.

California in September became the first state to recognize ride-sharing as a legitimate transportation service with new regulations. It was seen as a landmark victory for ride-sharing and all sharing economy companies.

Now, experts say, cities across the country are making room for services that just a year ago were slapped with cease-and-desist orders: Seattle has proposed regulations to legalize, with heavy restrictions, ride-sharing services, and Denver recently added public parking spots without meters for car-sharing programs.

"The most surprising thing is how fast it's gone from crazy idea to obvious," said Sunil Paul, chief executive officer and co-founder of Sidecar, a San Francisco-based ride-sharing service.

Still, Orsi cautions that public policymakers must wrestle with difficult health, taxation, safety and other issues in clearing the way for the new sharing economy services. What happens, for

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FILLING A VOID IN EMS SERVICES

WellSpan stops: Group wanted to encourage regionalization of services
Finding funds: Grantley EMS takes on costs of advanced life support

By Lauren Boyer
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If you have an emergency in Spring Garden Township, you're not likely to notice anything different.

You'll still get picked up by an ambulance.

Whatever your illness or injury, you'll still receive the same level of care you received before Jan. 1 — the day WellSpan's York Hospital discontinued leasing staff paramedics to regional EMS companies.

But it could have been a different story.

Spring Garden Township is only required to provide basic life support coverage, which includes emergency medical technicians but not paramedics.

Paramedics provide advanced life support services, which includes the ability to administer medications and heart monitoring. They ride on a mobile intensive care unit, or MICU, equipped with more life-saving technology.

At the end of August, Grantley — and others around the county who rented paramedics from WellSpan — received a letter from the health care provider notifying them of the changes.

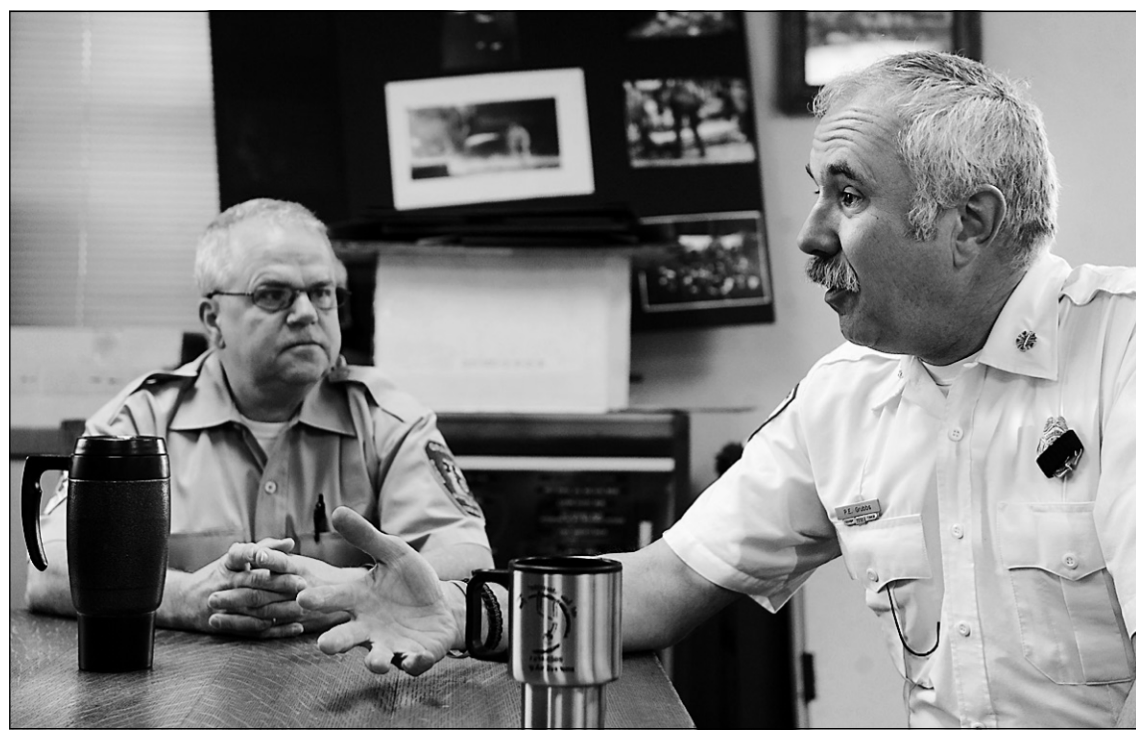
"It left the local community scrambling to figure out how to cover the void," said John Dommel, president of Grantley Fire and EMS.

The way Dommel sees it, the company had three choices.

Grantley, in order to continue its advanced life support services, could have rented paramedics from another provider.

The second option — to forego advanced life support altogether and allow their coverage area to lean on existing resources — wasn't really on the table, Dommel said.

The service, he added, is one



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From left, John Dommel, president of Grantley Fire and EMS, looks on as volunteer District Fire Chief Paul Grubbs talks about the company's future in the Spring Garden Township fire house.

township residents have become accustomed to since Grantley began staffing with WellSpan paramedics in July 2010.

At the time of its announcement, WellSpan noted that it wanted to encourage regionalization of EMS — a measure that might involve consolidation of smaller EMS companies scattered throughout the community.

One EMS group, Yoe Fire Company Ambulance Service, recently moved that direction by changing its name to York Regional Emergency Medical Services Inc. to more accurately reflect its services.

"With WellSpan's timing, they didn't give anyone time to explore regionalization options," said Paul Grubbs, volunteer

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THE COST TO BELONG

A membership to Grantley Fire and EMS costs \$40 per year.

"People wonder what that gets you," said Paul Grubbs. "Does it get you a free ride to the hospital? More or less."

For any patient it picks up, Grantley bills their insurance company.

The average basic life support transport costs \$600, Grubbs said. For ALS, that price increases to about \$1,100.

Sounds pricey?

The price you pay for an ambulance ride is more than gas and staff. It also helps pay for liability insurance, training of the people who can keep you alive, and restocking of equipment.

Ambulance company members stand to save money because they aren't responsible for paying for the portion of the ride that isn't covered by insurance, Grubbs said.

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