



July 12, 2011

Ald. Terry L. Witkowski
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Emergency Services Predominant in Fire Department Summary

*Alderman Witkowski proposes renaming Milwaukee Fire Department at
Public Safety meeting this week.*

“Milwaukee Emergency Response Services” may be the proposed new name for Milwaukee’s fire department after a Public Safety committee meeting on Thursday. Alderman Terry Witkowski is proposing the change to the city’s charter ordinance establishing fire departments, an ordinance last amended in 1966.

“Today, 93% of the calls prompting a service response are not fire related with the biggest percentage, 79%, being calls for emergency medical service. Of the fire related responses, including “smoke,” only one percent is structure fires. It seems to me that Emergency Response Services more accurately describes what they do,” Alderman Terry Witkowski said.

The Milwaukee Police Department provided ambulance service in the 1960s when the ordinance was last revised, the shift to the Fire Department handling such calls wasn’t until the 1970s. The change in name will not change other key elements of the charter ordinance, including the Common Council’s ability to establish rules and approve purchases for the department.

“Much of what the department handles, in addition to EMS services, are calls for service like stuck elevators and alarms going off,” Alderman Witkowski said. “New building codes, smoke alarm regulations and safety improvements have enhanced fire prevention. Our need for service has changed; the department’s name should reflect that.”

The item comes before the Public Safety Committee on Thursday, July 14 at 9:00 a.m. The press is invited to attend.

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