

Mayors to discuss emergency department

By JEFF ROMIG

Truth Staff

ELKHART — Discussions will soon be under way between the mayors of Elkhart and Goshen and county officials to determine a plan for the two cities' emergency management departments.

Elkhart and Goshen are two of only four Indiana cities spending taxpayer dollars on an emergency management department, which throughout the state is mainly a county function.

And that's how the Indiana State Emergency Management Agency likes it.

"From our perspective, we'd prefer to work directly with the counties," said Phil Roberts, deputy director of SEMA.

Goshen Mayor Allan Kauffman said it looks as if emergency management will be heading in the sole direction of Elkhart County.

"I always kind of figured the day would come that we did away with emergency management," he said.

County emergency management director Warren Allender was not available for comment.

Elkhart Mayor Dave Miller said he was open to all options concerning changes to emergency management at a city level.

"Before, I was (for a) full-time director, pedal to the metal," Miller said. "But the city council sent a strong message to us. We have to take that into consideration."

That message was sent during the 2004 budget hearings, when the Elkhart city council cut the emergency management director's position from full time to part time.

Miller said the city saw two distinct roles from emergency management: emergency preparedness and civil defense.



DAVE MILLER



ALLAN KAUFFMAN

EMERGENCY

From Page A3

Ray Balogh, the deputy director of the city of Elkhart's emergency management department, said the department has saved the city more than \$200,000 in police and fire department overtime.

"We return three dollars for every four spent," he said.

Miller said they needed to figure

out why 89 other counties believed that emergency management as a function of county government was sufficient.

"We're going to take a hard look at it," he said.

Contact Jeff Romig at jromig@etruth.com.