

PORTAL RESCUE NEWS

January 1994

Number 8

Editor - Robert Morse

As a supporter and a potential recipient of the services of Portal Rescue we invite you to learn a bit more about the organization. Read on!

What's New in '93

Ambulance from Douglas

In June we received from the City of Douglas a gift of an ambulance they had retired from service. While we cannot operate it as an ambulance because of lack of certification, among other reasons, it is nevertheless fully equipped and represents a quantum jump in the level of emergency medical service we are able to offer the community. What we can do, when the patient's condition warrants, is transport immediately to meet the Douglas ambulance on the road. This effectively halves the time to get a patient to the hospital compared to the system where Douglas came here to pick up patients, and benefits Douglas by reducing mileage and time unavailable for other calls for their ambulances.

The Portal community owes a debt of gratitude to the City of Douglas and those who were most instrumental in making the arrangements, namely the Mayor, the City Council and the Fire Chief, for this most welcome gift. It is another manifestation of the fine spirit of cooperation between our communities.

This summer Douglas started operating ambulances staffed by paramedics. This provides a higher level of skills available to our patients when they are transferred to a Douglas ambulance and also means that our IEMTs will not have to accompany the patient all the way to Douglas as they did before Douglas had advanced life support capabilities.

Water trailer

This summer we added an additional piece of fire equipment which substantially increases our capabilities. It is a 400 gallon water trailer which is equipped with pump, foam equipment and hose

reel and thus can serve as a source of extra water for our engine or as a second engine by itself. This more than doubles our water supply available at a fire.

This equipment evolved from a donated trailer frame and running gear, a donated tank and a donated hose reel. Dennis McAvoy provided the fabrication and we purchased the pump, tire and foam equipment with help from a grant from the Rural Community Fire Protection (RCFP) program, which is funded jointly by the State Land Department and the Forest Service. All in all, a substantial increase in protection for very little money.

Helispot

Helicopter transport to a Level 1 Trauma Center in Tucson (Tucson Medical Center or University Medical Center) has, in the past several months, become more frequently used by Portal Rescue (three times in the last five months). It is now the usual method of transport for any moderate to severe trauma patient and for some medical patients. There are several reasons for this. One is the reduced level of medical specialties available at Douglas, e.g. no orthopedics. Perhaps more significant is the increasing standards of emergency medical service nationwide and the greater sophistication of trauma centers such as TMC and UMC. Another major factor is our remote (from medical facilities) location. The "Golden Hour", that critical first hour of treatment so important to the patient, becomes even more important here where a trauma center is, at best, two hours away.

In order to keep abreast of these changes we have recently completed a helicopter landing site (helispot) adjacent to our Fire Station. Mary Willy allowed us to use a site on her property. We have cleared and seeded it and have been watering it to get grasses going. By next spring we hope to have a stand of grass that will keep down the dust. You

may recall that we formerly used the Forest Service helipad at what is now the Visitor Center. This is no longer available.

Water System

This summer we drilled a water well on our property and installed a piping system to facilitate watering the plantings and filling the fire reserve water tank. This system now in place is the first step toward a community center facility which is an item on our long range wish list.

The water well project, which cost \$5,000, was funded entirely by donations from a few supporters and a significant discount by Elbrock Water Systems. It did not utilize any General Fund monies.

Year in Review

Run records

In the last full year for which figures are available (fiscal 1993) Portal Rescue responded to 38 emergency medical calls. The breakdown of these data is shown in Table 1.

Increasingly restrictive and demanding legislation

In all respects, our world seems to continually get more complex, more legalistic, more bureaucratic and more demanding. We notice it here at Portal Rescue too.

Within the past year OSHA regulations forced us to provide a series of Hepatitis B vaccinations for each of our EMTs and we will also have to do this for any new EMTs added to the roster in the future. These shots cost about \$125 per person. We must also provide special protective equipment and special record keeping—for 20 years—to meet OSHA regulations concerning bloodborne pathogens.

At the state level there are several bills still in the works or recently passed which will change procedures, require additional training and paperwork and add to the cost of operating. It is becoming harder every day to "just help your neighbors" which is the premise upon which Portal Rescue was founded 13 years ago.

Readiness Checks

We are fortunate in Portal to have few calls for our services; about one every 10 days, on average, but this also creates the problem of maintaining skills that may not be called on for long periods. A second problem is one of maintaining readiness of our aged and maintenance prone vehicles. The first problem is addressed with a regular schedule of continuing education or

TABLE 1 - SUMMARY OF EMS CALLS - FY 1993

TYPE OF CALL		TRANSPORT TO HOSPITAL	
Medical	19	Not required	17
Trauma	16	By private vehicle	12
Search	3	By Douglas Ambulance	4
TOTAL CALLS	38	By Bowie Ambulance	2
Basic Life Support	32	By Hidalgo Ambulance	2
Advanced Life Support	3	By Air Ambulance	1
Visitor	13	TOTAL AMBULANCE TRANSPORTS	9
Resident	25	TOTAL TRANSPORTS	21

training classes. All personnel (EMT and/or Firefighter) are required to attend at least half of the training scheduled for their certification (usually one class per month) during the course of a year in order to maintain membership.

Although we have never been unable to respond to a call due to vehicle failure we have had many maintenance problems. This year we addressed this with the establishment of regularly scheduled complete checkouts of all vehicles by rotating teams of EMTs and firefighters. Thereby all persons who might respond to a call have a chance to become familiar with the vehicles and their equipment in a relaxed, non-stressful environment. Of course, the regular checking and running is bound to increase the reliability of the vehicles.

A Look Ahead

New EMT Class

In mid-October Cochise College and instructor Ernie Beyer began an EMT certification class in Portal to train new EMTs and also permit some current EMTs to obtain the training necessary for their bi-annual re-certification. The class meets Monday and Wednesday evenings from 6:00 to 10:00 PM for a total of 120 classroom hours and had an initial enrollment of 11 prospective EMTs and 8 refreshers.

The college and the instructor are committed to preparing this class to take the National Registry test at the completion of the course. National Registry certification offers an additional assurance of competence in basic skills and recognition throughout the U.S. This will permit our EMTs to practice in New Mexico (Rodeo) without the hassle and expense of meeting the differing certification requirements of Arizona and New Mexico.

Fire Insurance

Portal Rescue has recently made application for a Class 9 rating to ISO Commercial Risk Services Inc., the organization which establishes the rating classification used by insurance companies to set your fire insurance rates. We are now a Class 10 which equates to no fire protection. To attain a

Class 9 rating we have to demonstrate to ISO, certain levels of equipment and training which we believe we have met. If our application is approved it will mean a potential reduction in your fire insurance rates on residential property within 10 road miles of the Portal Fire Station. In other communities this reduction has been about 15% but the figure is variable depending on your agent and insurance carrier. If a Class 9 rating is obtained it will be necessary for YOU to notify your agent to obtain any reduction. We will keep you informed on progress on this.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of Portal Rescue Inc. will be held on Thursday February 3, 1994 at the Portal Library. The meeting agenda includes the election of the nine Board Members who run the organization and a report on the past year's activities. This year there will also be a proposed change in the By-Laws regarding the way in which the three "outside" or "at-large" members of the Board are elected. The change will give ALL members of our service area (not just Portal Rescue personnel) the opportunity to nominate and vote on these three governing board positions. This change is intended to make Portal Rescue more responsive to the needs and wishes of the community and broaden our base of support.

"Killer" Bees

You have no doubt heard of the advance of the so called "killer bees" (more properly called "Africanized Honey Bees") into Arizona. Most of this is media hype but there IS a strain of bees which tend to be more aggressive that have shown up throughout southern Arizona. There is no way to visually tell them from "regular" honey bees. They are very defensive of their hive or swarm and may attack intruders in large numbers. Someone has described them as "ordinary bees with an attitude problem". Your best defense IF ATTACKED, is to run—as far as you can—as fast as you can.

If you have a swarm or hive on your property do not attempt to remove them yourself. Get professional assistance. In our area Mr. Dan Shultis, (557-2293) may be able to help you. Portal

Rescue cannot help with bee removal.

If, however, someone is being stung, or has been stung, call Portal Rescue at 558-2222 and describe the problem. We have the specialized equipment to rescue the patient and kill the bees. It takes rescuers in fully protective gear and a high volume stream of soapy water or foam to kill the bees. Do not attempt to help the patient being attacked—you will just become another victim.

To a person allergic to bee venom, even a single sting can be life threatening. If you are stung and have ANY reaction, other than a momentary pain at the sting site, call 558-2222 immediately. Be especially alert for any difficulty in breathing, any swelling (especially in the throat), any rash, swelling or itching remote from the sting site or any change in heart rate. These symptoms require IMMEDIATE medical attention. Remember, in the U.S. far more people die from bee stings than from rattlesnake bites.

Finances

It takes money to operate Portal Rescue, sometimes substantial amounts of money. A look at our 1993 Financial Report below (Fig. 1, Pg. 6) will show you where it came from and where it went. A few comments on the report follow:

Our biggest financial "coup" this year was the decision of a movie production company to shoot some scenes of a movie called "Geronimo" (premiered on television by TNT in early December) in the canyon. There were several hundred people involved in the production. Portal Rescue provided full time emergency medical standby at the site and since most of our members donated their hours we were able to post an income of \$2,123 for the project.

On the other side of the coin, we had less than expected income from wildland fires this year. We have a contract with the State Land Department to fight wildland fires beyond our immediate area. There

were numerous fires in other areas of the state but only two near here so our fire income was only \$609 this year.

This year our grant from the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), on which we depend so heavily, was \$3,537. This will pay about 70% of our insurance bill.

Over the years donations from our many friends have been the primary source of our funding (40%) and grants from the ADHS have provided most of the remainder (36%) (see Table 2). In recent years we have seen a steady and continuing tendency of the legislature to trim aid to agencies such as ours. In fact, in the '92-'93 fiscal year there were no provider grants in Arizona. We did, however, receive a training grant. The trend is shown in Table 2. If state aid continues to decline or be uncertain it will create severe problems for us since, while our support from the community has been outstanding, it would be difficult to fund our activities wholly from local sources. We try to keep a "rainy day" cash reserve in case ADHS and legislative politicians again forget about the rural areas of Arizona, like Portal.

Table 2

PORTAL RESCUE - SOURCES OF FUNDS					
YEAR ↓	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
DHS Grant	4783	6318	6922	1800	3537
RCFP Grant		1500		1500	
Donations	4720	5518	2206	9495	4062
EMS Services	1129	354	450	993	2482
Fire Services		1179	2254	1283	609
Miscellaneous	104	460	375	238	224
TOTALS (\$)	10736	15329	12207	15309	10914