

Portal Rescue News

March, 1999

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Editor Anthony Cockerell

ANNUAL MEETING

Portal Rescue's annual meeting will be held Thursday, March 25 at 7:30 p.m. in the fire station classroom. The purpose of the annual meeting is to elect members to the Board of Directors.

The nine-member board is made up of five Portal Rescue fire and/or EMS volunteers who are nominated and voted on by active members and four community representatives nominated and voted on by everyone present.

In addition to the elections, reports on the past year will be made by the Treasurer, EMS Chief, and Fire Chief.

This year's program will include a community health forum presented by Portal Rescue EMTs. The health topics discussed will include heart attacks and strokes. The information you learn might save your life or the life of a loved one. Don't miss it!

We get letters . . .
"This thank you is for your fast response to my recent accident. Your skills in handling this type of emergency deserve applause and recognition. I am quite certain that without your medical knowledge and care the outcome of my misfortune would have been a fatality. Thank you all in giving me a second shot at life."

NEW FACES IN PORTAL RESCUE

By Debbie Rothpletz

Saturday, November 6, 1998, was the first day of our new EMT training program. We started class at 8:00 a.m. with a great guest speaker and a strong cup of coffee. By noon we were ready to break for lunch so our brains could digest what we had learned, which made room for the afternoon session. At 5:00 p.m. when class was adjourned our minds were reeling with new knowledge. But the students were like sponges and wanted more. By Monday night we were hard at it again. We spent many extra hours devoted to additional studying. The five new students are very dedicated individuals. They looked forward to class days and study sessions and kept my job of teaching very interesting. To say the least, they keep me on my toes.

Most of our current EMTs took advantage of the class to brush up on their skills and give words of encouragement to the new recruits.

Final written exams were given March 5 and practical exams on the 6th. Everyone passed with flying colors! Next up is a written National Registry Exam to be taken in Tucson.

Our five new faces to the EMS roster will be Kim Gee and Anthony Cockerell, who are already firefighters for Portal Rescue, and Kay Ralston, Diane Smith, and Tamara Smejkal.

I would like to thank each and every person who made this class a success. I could not have done it without the support of my family, friends, and community members.

SEW WHAT SCHOLARSHIPS

By Anthony Cockerell

As we all know by now a new EMT class is in progress. With this class comes lots of expenses: blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, books, tuition, and many other supplies needed for this field.

The Sew What Club saw this and generously offered a scholarship in the amount of \$125 to each of the students to be used for tuition. Five students were fortunate to have this opportunity. This scholarship took a lot of pressure off us and we would like to sincerely thank the Sew What Club for their generosity. You are always supportive and it is very much appreciated. Thank you! From the EMT students of Portal Rescue.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Devorie Griffiths

Thank you EMTs, firefighters, and members of our community for allowing me to be a part of Portal Rescue again this year. I strive to keep the best interests of the organization and its volunteers at heart when serving on the Board of Directors. I hope I have represented you well.

1998 was a good year for Portal Rescue. We had no major crises or projects going on which allowed us to concentrate on taking care of business as usual (or as usual as emergency services can be). Our building and grounds are in great shape (thanks, Pete Miller.) We lost three of our long-time volunteers, but gained two new ones. We have a bright new group of students who will become EMTs very soon. Several

volunteers have rededicated themselves and their time to Portal Rescue and have inspired us all. Our community has been extremely supportive both emotionally and financially. The only sad part being we all lost some very dear friends during this past year who were integral parts of our community. We will always remember them.

It has been a real pleasure to serve with this year's board members. Many thanks to Max Rothpletz, Fire Chief, and Fran Zweifel, EMS Chief—you both have done a great job with your departments! Officers Yvette Rehurek, Mary Carson, and Kate Arambula—thanks for all the time and work you've contributed. Kim Gee and Bruce Miller, you've both provided invaluable input and have represented your department and community well. Debbie Rothpletz, you do it all—firefighter, EMT, CPR instructor, EMT instructor, board member and friend! Thanks for the many, many hours you tirelessly give in representing Portal Rescue's members and governing board in our community and throughout the county and state—you make us all look good!

These people represent all the members in our organization. Your input is important to us and you are welcome and encouraged to attend the monthly board meetings. Come find out what is happening from the business side of your organization. Remember, your EMS and Fire Chief is your voice on the Board. Share suggestions, comments, and requests with them to bring to the board meetings. Let us know how we are doing. I look forward to 1999...

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

By Max Rothpletz

1998 was another slow year for fires in our area, I guess we have El Nino to thank for that. Even without fires there was plenty of action around the fire department.

We had two volunteers retire, Pat Willy and Frank Tapp, and we will miss them. We gained two new firefighters as well, E.T. Collingsworth and Dave Utterback. Welcome aboard.

Barney Tomberlin and Mitch Webster performed safety inspections for residents in the community. There were a few motor vehicle accidents and some rescuing of keys from locked cars. We did have a few small fires although El Nino took care of the worst.

We did have lots of training which included flood evacuation, blood borne pathogens, hazardous materials, personal protective equipment, ropes/high angle rescue, fire extinguishers, and the list goes on.

I would like to thank the following people: Dan Rehurek, Chuck Jensen and Bob Chew for the pet projects that they accomplished around the fire house for us; specialists Dennis McAvoy-HazMat, Barney Tomberlin-Safety/Investigator, Gary Wisdom-Extrication, Jeff Gee-Rope Rescue and Debbie Rothpletz-Health. I would also like to thank my fellow Board members, our EMTs, the community, but most of all, thank you FIREFIGHTERS--you have made my job as Chief just Jake.

We get letters...
"You provide such a wonderful, unselfish service...also, thank you for the kindness you shared with my family"

EMS CHIEF'S REPORT: '98

By Fran Zweifel

We have had a full year. There were 37 EMS calls in 1998 (which averages about one every 10 days), with emergencies ranging from allergic reactions to severe motor vehicle accidents. Six of these emergencies warranted calling the medical helicopter.

Besides responding to emergency calls, our EMTs attended monthly meetings and special all-day training sessions. Teams inspected the emergency medical vehicle on a rotating basis, and an EMT checked the Automatic External Defibrillator every day.

The new classroom, built with the blood, sweat and tears of local residents and donations from other generous, right-thinking folks, is being put to its best use. Debbie Rothpletz has taken on the monumental task of teaching another EMT course in which five new students are enrolled and working hard. Several Portal Rescue EMTs are retaking all or parts of the course in order to refresh their memories and skills. Instructors come from within Portal Rescue and other agencies around the county.

We lost one EMT last year and gained another: Joan White resigned, and Mr. E.T. Collingsworth, a certified EMT who became a Portal area resident this past year, has joined the team. We fervently hope the five students currently taking the EMT course will be added to the roster in the spring.

If you wonder how you can help, please keep in mind that Portal Rescue is all volunteer, and does not charge for its EMS calls. Supplies run out, the emergency vehicles must be maintained, equipment needs to be repaired or replaced. Your generosity is what keeps us operating to help you and your neighbors.

NOTES FROM THE TREASURER

By Yvette Rehurek

Portal Rescue is in sound financial condition. Our fiscal year began July 1, and as of this date we are about \$3,500 short of reaching our projected income of \$19,300. We have not received the income projected for fighting fires, but memorial donations have increased our donations by a considerable amount. Our grant from the Arizona Department of Health Services is \$2,706 down from \$3,500 last year. The grant money is only for EMS supplies, vehicle subsidies and extrication equipment, not insurance costs as in the past.

How important are your donations? We couldn't operate without them. Wildland fires have provided us with good income in years past, but not in the last 2 years. With grant monies getting less each year, we depend on your donations more and more. We have many dedicated EMT's and firefighters. They are training constantly to be there for you in time of need. Show your support for them and Portal Rescue by making an annual donation.

A detailed financial report will be presented at the annual meeting on March 25th.

IN MEMORIAM

The Portal community mourns the loss of the following community members this past year: Alden Hayes, Estelle Beumler, Maureen Hicks, Betty Sauerman, Pat Hagan and William Kambitch. The members of Portal Rescue extend deepest sympathy to the families of these friends. Our sympathies also go out to Mary Reece who lost her father; to Gerry Hernbrode who lost her sister; to Robbie Ward who lost her daughter; to Finn and Sally Richards who lost a grandson; to Alice Chew who lost her brother, and to the family of Willis Gertsch, former Portal resident.

To all the families, we want to express a heartfelt "thank you" for naming Portal Rescue as the recipient of memorial donations. As of December 31st, we have received \$4,125 in memorials. These donations help us continue our service to the community and to purchase special equipment that we would not otherwise obtain.

Memorial donations are a wonderful way to also honor friends or relatives who are not part of this community. An acknowledgement of the donation is sent to the surviving family. Please include the name and address of a family member along with the donation. All donations are tax-deductible.

EMS SUMMARY

Portal Rescue EMTs responded to 34 calls and treated 37 patients in 1998. Twelve were trauma and 22 were medical calls. Thirteen patients were transported to a hospital by ambulance, 6 were transported by medical helicopter, and 6 were transported by private vehicle. Ten of these calls were Basic Life Support and 24 were Advanced Life Support. Nine patients were visitors and 28 were residents.

WILDERNESS EMT COURSE

By Jeff Gee

10-16-98 to 10-22-98 (54 hr.)

3 year certification

Taught by *Wilderness Medical Associates*. Sponsored by Mike "Woody" LaBrecque and Fry Fire Dept. in Sierra Vista.

Purpose: Conventional first aid and EMT curricula are designed for an urban environment and assume the availability of 911 communications and rapid ambulance transport to a hospital. Backcountry outfitters have found the conventional medical protocols do not address the specialized wilderness context of delayed rescue, transport in remote areas, prolonged exposure to severe environments, and the limited availability of medical equipment.

With the help of Portal Rescue and the generous Portal, Paradise, and Rodeo communities, I was able to attend the six-day course last October in the Dragoon Mountains. The course was run almost military style--very serious and always on time.

A typical day would be: 5 a.m. wake up, get dressed, study for an hour or so, eat breakfast and be ready for class at 7 a.m. Class included lectures, videos, slides, quizzes and practical simulated exercises (two to four per day.) One morning we packaged a patient in a "Stokes Basket" then had to carry him around for about an hour over boulders and around cactus to practice every aspect of hand carry transport over rough terrain. About 12 noon we break for a great lunch prepared by Chef Woody. Then 1 p.m. back to class for more of the same. One afternoon Woody came running into the classroom covered in blood and screaming with a sharp metal can lid stuck halfway into his forearm. We all just stood around and looked at him, because we knew "wound management" was next.

5 or 6 p.m. time for dinner, Woody always prepared great huge meals. You

might think the day was over by now, but by 8 p.m. we are back in the classrooms to prepare for the night operations. We would go out on two to six-hour search and rescue missions or mass casualty training. Then it's time to do some reading, homework, and then off to bed—5 a.m. arrives early.

In the simulations we always had to carry everything we needed such as splints, oxygen, spineboards, along with any needed "bivy" supplies food, water, etc. We could not just verbalize that we had a first aid device, we had to use only those items we actually had on hand.

The instructors had a great time planing the scenarios around all the boulders; they said it was one of the best locations they had been to for a class. One night they put one of the biggest students down into a 20-foot crack in the rocks. He had lots of injuries; it took a long time to package and extricate him. We also had some unplanned visitors in the way of two live rattlesnakes and scorpions, which was a real thrill for those students from New York City.

It was a pleasure to be in the class, making new friends and learning new skills. We were already certified EMTs or above, and everyone brought their own special skills to the group. We had Paramedics, Firefighters, National Park Rangers, Nurses, EMTs, Wilderness Guides, DEA and ATF Agents. We all learned a lot and went away with a new skill level. I hope we can send a few more people from Portal Rescue next year. (Woody invited me back next year as a helper, so I plan to attend).

I again want to thank the Portal Community for their support and the opportunity to take this course. It was well worth it!

Continued on next page

Following are the protocols a Wilderness EMT learns:

1. Anaphylaxis (treatment)
2. Wound management and impaled objects (object removal)
3. CPR (ability to discontinue CPR)
4. Spine Injuries (ability to clear spine)
5. Joint Dislocations (reductions of shoulder, patella/knee, and digits)

As an example: urban EMT courses do not cover reduction of shoulder dislocations because permanent damage is unlikely to occur if a patient reaches an emergency room within two hours. If, however many hours elapse between dislocation and reduction, permanent damage is possible.

FIRE STATISTICS

According to the National Fire Protection Association, in 1997 there were 1,795,000 fires in the U.S. The good news is this number was down 9.1% from 1996. The bad news is there is still one fire every 18 seconds.

According to the NFPA, in 1997 there were 4,050 civilian fire deaths in the U.S. The good news is fire deaths are down 18.8%. The bad news is there is still one death every 130 minutes.

**Please check your
smoke alarms and fire
extinguishers.**

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL FIRE SCHOOL

By Max Rothpletz

In September 1998, I had the pleasure of attending the 25th Annual Arizona State Fire School. During the opening ceremonies the Mesa Fire Department Honor Guard marched into the meeting hall to a tune they played on bagpipes and drums. They then conducted a firefighter memorial service. There was hardly a dry eye in the house. Next the Honorable Governor Jane Dee Hull gave an inspirational talk. She is a big supporter of emergency services. Towards the end of the opening ceremonies one of our keynote speakers was Chief Steve Schuman of the Wantagh N.Y. Fire Department. Chief Schuman was badly burned during a "routine" house fire. After his address every firefighter in the place was convinced of the need for proper protective equipment.

After the opening ceremonies we proceeded to our workshops. There were 29 different workshops available. I signed up for the Rural/Volunteer Fire Management Class. I learned different tools to be a better fire chief.

The school was not all work; one evening there was a fire apparatus and custom car show. One fire truck on display cost enough to operate Portal Rescue for 10 years. During the show, members from fire departments around Arizona competed in some "friendly" contests. These contests were "Barrel Squirt" and "Bucket Brigade". It was good clean, wet, fun for all. I am looking forward to the next fire school.

CALLER ID SERVICE NOW AVAILABLE

Valley Telephone Cooperative recently donated caller ID units for the Portal Rescue emergency dispatch phones (558-2222). With this new service dispatchers are able to identify who is calling even before the phone is answered.

This provides an invaluable service to all members of our community who may need medical or fire assistance but are unable to verbally request help. By identifying the caller's phone number and name, we can follow up to determine if help is indeed needed. Portal Rescue's locator guide has been sorted by number to quickly identify the caller. By using our locator guide, we are providing our own "enhanced 911 system" in our area.

This system will work only if you do not have a block on your phone. If your phone is blocked, information comes across our caller ID units as unavailable. Is your line blocked? Do you want to know if your number and name are included in our system? Call 558-2222 and tell the dispatcher you are checking to see if caller ID identified you. Ask to find out if your name and number is included in the locator guide.

We sincerely thank Valley Telephone Cooperative for their continued support of Portal Rescue and in providing this service for you, its members.

We get letters...
"We appreciate the professionalism and level of care provided by your crew... it was a real pleasure to work with you, everyone was professional and efficient."
from Critical Air IV Crew

LOCATOR GUIDE

It is very important to maintain a current locator guide with directions to find you during an emergency. If you are new to the area or know someone who is, please call to request a New Resident Form or pick one up from Postmistress Joan Jensen in Portal. This locator guide gives a detailed description of how to get to your house. It can save precious time in an emergency situation.

CLASSROOM/MEETING ROOM AT FIRESTATION

The final touches have been done in the new classroom. The cement floor has been painted (beautifully, too) and the baseboards are up. The chalkboard, dry erase boards, and screen are mounted, pictures and clock are hung. The classroom looks great and is now available for public use.

Are you having a community meeting, need a gathering place for friends, or need a place to have a reception or party? Call Yvette Rehurek (558-2254) to reserve the room for your event. If you are hosting a community meeting, there is no charge for use of the room. Rates for private use vary according to hours needed and whether kitchen will be used. Yvette will provide an agreement of use to rent this facility. A television, VCR, slide projector, lectern, tables and chairs are available for use.

We are so proud of our new classroom and ask that everyone help us take good care of it.

YEAR THREE OF THE SOUP KITCHEN

By Mary Carson

This is the third year of our Soup Kitchen fundraiser and each year we seem to get bigger and better. We had three very successful days under the chairmanship of Kitty Deiss and her committee of five: Jan Gee, Peggy Spofford-Wallace, Mary Carson, Yvette Rehurek and Barbara Miller.

There were over 36 different soups, stews and chili served. Including the breads and desserts, we had food contributions brought in by more than 53 community members. Some who brought in food were also there to help with setting up, serving, and cleaning on those three days.

The Portal Store supplied the ice, butter, and lemonade. Without this community's support the Soup Kitchen couldn't happen. A special "thank you!" to all our contributors of food and help.

What really makes these days enjoyable is seeing all the guests enjoying their meals. This year we served over 240 people. Our publicity brought in people from greater Cochise and Hidalgo Counties as well as 10 other states and British Columbia. These strangers are now friends of Portal Rescue.

Of course the reason for this event is to raise money for Portal Rescue. This year the food sales brought in over \$1,200. The raffle for the circular saw contributed by Bob Squire gave us an additional \$380. It was won by Nettie Somoza of Rodeo. The raffle for the bird print drawn and donated by David Utterback brought in \$ 84. Alice Chew was the lucky winner. This year Portal Rescue published and sold a Soup Kitchen Cookbook. After subtracting the cost of printing, they have brought in an additional \$128 so far. That makes

the grand total of proceeds to benefit Portal Rescue \$1,792. These are the dollars that will help keep the vehicles operating, the ambulance stocked with supplies and equipment, and the utilities and insurance paid.

Thank you for another successful Soup Kitchen! The wonderful cooks, committee members, and customers made the event the success it turned out to be.

SOUP KITCHEN COOKBOOK

Did you get your copy during the Soup Kitchen? It's not too late. These first-edition cookbooks will be offered for sale at the Portal Store. The cost is \$8.00 and all proceeds go directly to Portal Rescue.

Community chefs who prepare the fabulous soups, breads and desserts for the Annual Soup Kitchen have shared their secret recipes. These recipes have been compiled into a great-looking cookbook which was first offered for sale during this year's Soup Kitchen. If you enjoyed the food, this cookbook is a must have. Family and friends would love to receive one too--these make great gifts. So don't miss out, get your copy today!

We get letters . . .

"Thank you so much for your help during the passing of our dearest friend. It was the most difficult time any of us have ever faced, but we know that we all did everything possible. Your efforts meant a great deal to us. Your team showed a kindness and respect that will not be forgotten."

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL TRAUMA CONFERENCE

By Russ Griffiths

What do EMTs talk about for four hours while traveling on the interstate to a trauma conference? Things like how easily these new small cars can *just about fit* under the backs of the 18 wheelers we are sharing the road with, and how the semi trucks always seem to veer your way while you are passing them, and looking up the placard symbols on the tanker trucks to see what they are carrying. Down right scary stuff! It'll keep you on your toes but it doesn't get much "funner" than that!

Prior to the opening workshop, we walked through an EMT's "dream land". Every kind of toy and gadget you could ever want was on display by the vendor. After an hour of seeing the newest technology available and consuming vast quantities of coffee and donuts we headed to the main conference center for the keynote address, "Code Catastrophe: Chemical-Biological Terrorism". (Made the interstate stuff seem pretty tame.)

After the keynote address, three concurrent tracks of classes were held for the rest of the day. Kate, Debbie, Max and I broke up into pairs to cover as many classes as we could that we felt would be most pertinent to Portal Rescue. Some of the workshops we attended over the two days were: Trauma Research—What's New, Prehospital Trauma Airway Management, Patterns of Fatal Injury, Initial Patient Approach—Principles of the First Few Minutes of Patient Assessment, Ethics, Trauma in the Wilderness, and Innovative Alternative Intubation Techniques just to name a few. The keynote address on the second morning was "Trauma and Laws of Negligence".

We all had fun meeting old friends and new and establishing contacts throughout the state. We received a week's worth of training in two intensive days. Thanks to each of you who made it possible for us to receive this training which will allow us to continue providing the best care possible to all our patients.

THE GOOSE STORY by Harry Noyes

Submitted by Dennis McAvoy

Dedicated to Portal Rescue Volunteers

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going more quickly and easily because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.

If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are.

When the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point. It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs with people or with geese flying south.

Finally--and this is important--when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshots and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with the goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose.

If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that.

DISASTER DAY IN COCHISE COUNTY

By Debbie Rothpletz

We're up at 4:00 a.m., gone by 5:00 to be in Douglas by 6:00 to participate in a county wide disaster drill. Portal Rescue's role in the drill was as evaluators and victims. The students volunteered to be victims for this disaster which was a tour bus verses a semi-truck carrying hazardous materials. Portal's eight victims included Diane Smith, Kay Ralston, Tamara Smejkal, Lois Bernard, Anthony Cockerell, Kim Gee, Heather Rothpletz and Max Rothpletz Jr., with Kate Arambula, Chris Lentz and Debbie Rothpletz being evaluators of the huge operation. The drill was scheduled to last several hours with emergency medical personnel from throughout Cochise County refining their life-saving skills during this simulated accident which was held in the K-Mart parking lot in Douglas. Patients were triaged (which is a medical method of determining who needs to be treated immediately in the field, and who may wait, depending on the nature of the patient's injuries.) Wounds were treated, with some patients being sent by ambulance to Southeast Arizona Medical Center. Two lucky patients were sent by Life Net helicopter service to the hospital, Max Jr. being one of those lucky people (free of charge, thank goodness!) Anthony and Heather were both contaminated by the hazardous material and any rescuer who tried to help them became a victim him/herself. The Haz-Mat team from Sierra Vista donned their blue "space suits" to save Anthony from death's door. In the process of being "decontaminated", he was stripped of all his clothes (except swim trunks) and placed in a wading pool. This collects the contaminated

water to be disposed of properly. Every place on his body was hosed down with water. Normally, you are scrubbed with a toilet brush from head to toe. Anthony was a real trooper on this cool morning. (We all shivered!)

These drills are a very good learning experience as well as a lot of fun for everyone. We look forward to the next Cochise County Disaster Drill.

We get letters . . .

"Portal and the surrounding community are most fortunate to have an outstanding volunteer group of dedicated, well trained and professional individuals who have put together and maintained such a high level organization. We were reminded of this recently when a patient suffered severe and truly life threatening injuries from an auto accident. The members of Portal Rescue there that night were impressive in their professional handling of a grave situation. No doubt a life was saved that night by Portal Rescue."

* * * * *

"I can't thank you enough for your assistance with my husband. I doubt I'll ever forget it. We kid my husband that he had ½ the town to his rescue. Thank you many times over."

EMT CLASS NEARS CONCLUSION

By Diane Smith

On November 6th, five individuals (Tamara Smejkal, Anthony Cockerell, Kim Gee, Kay Ralston-Post and Diane Smith) met in a shared endeavor—one that would culminate in their becoming a qualified team of Emergency Medical Technicians.

Two of the students brought a medical background with them. Tamara is a Lay Midwife and Kay is a Registered Nurse, practicing most recently in the Emergency Department at St. Luke's Hospital in Milwaukee, WI.

There were moments of doubt, i.e., when the entire human anatomy was covered in one mind-numbing session; and moments of frustration when the struggle to grasp a concept wasn't immediately successful or a student overlooked something in a scenario and "lost" the patient.

But, with the never-ending encouragement, praise and optimism of the instructor, Debbie Rothpletz, insecurities faded, and the class soon found itself enjoying the challenging information being presented.

In addition to classroom hours the students were able to get in some hands-on learning when they participated as "victims" in the county disaster drill. They also got some hands on experience at practicing as EMTs at a "fire and rescue" scene when an old building behind Jeff and Kim Gee's house was burned.

As they count down to exam time the hours increase, the class meets two nights a week and all day Saturday. The last few weeks involve fine-tuning skills which must be exhibited in order to pass the practical exam. The National Registry written exam must also be taken and passed with 80% or higher

prior to the students receiving certification as EMTs.

The class hopes that Debbie was right when she reassured them: "you will get this." Their reply? "We're counting on it."



The Patch Jul / Aug 1998

HERE COMES THE HELICOPTER

By Gerry Hernbrode

When rapid transport to a trauma center is crucial to the health of the patient, a medical helicopter can land on sites other than the Portal Fire Station Heliport. Using the GPS (Global Positioning System) Locator, EMTs can direct the helicopter to clear landing sites including but not limited to Rodeo, Rustler Park, Paradise Cemetery, South Fork and Skeleton Canyon trailheads. When necessary firefighters can control traffic and establish a landing zone even on Highway 80.

WHAT IS NEEDED ON AN EMS CALL?

By Fran Zweifel

Do you have any idea how much equipment and supplies may be used on any one EMS call? The number of items likely to be needed is staggering.

Gloves for each EMT and protective shields are a MUST. Oxygen, tubing, masks, or bag valve masks for assisting breathing are almost always needed. Other supplies that are expended are bandages and dressings, absorbent pads, adhesive tapes of various kinds and sizes, splints, head blocks, cervical collars, alcohol preps, antiseptics, blood sugar test strips, lancets, pipettes, airway devices, and batteries.

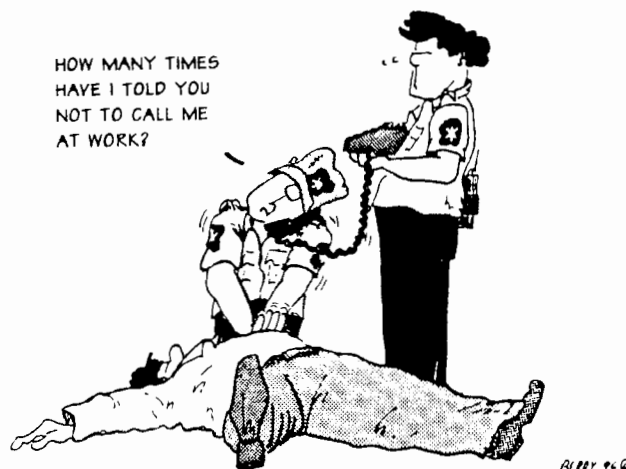
If a call requires the skills of our IEMTs, the supplies used may also include IV solutions, tourniquets, gauze, veniguards, administration sets, needles, and medications from their drug boxes.

Blankets, sheets, pillows, and towels are standard supplies regularly used and frequently not returned.

Equipment Portal Rescue has that might be needed to provide patient care includes: oxygen bottle, spine boards and straps, KED extrication device for protection of the spine of a seated patient, pulse oximeter, glucose machine, suction devices, MAST (pressure trousers used to control bleeding, stabilize pelvic fractures, and to treat shock), vacuum splints for limbs or whole body, traction splints, CPR board, AED, stethoscopes, cardiac scope, shears, blood pressure machine and cuffs, laryngoscope, gurney and flashlights.

Communications is a vital concern for the EMTs. To maintain contact with dispatch and base hospital medical control, we have mobile radios, personal radios and pagers, EMSCOM radio, and cellular phone. Recording patient information and EMT action is mandated and requires many forms, pens, and clipboard.

But most importantly, every call requires the minds, eyes, ears, and hands of our very dedicated EMTs.



EMS- RURAL RESPONDERS

- “Every time a call goes out for an accident, the first thing I think about is where are my kids... what road are they on... where did they say they were going?”
- “What do I do with the 18-year old EMT riding next to me when we come around the corner and find his best friend from school under a car?”
- “It was a head-on wreck, and an off-duty paramedic was first on the scene. The first patient he found dead was his sister.”

Those aren't quotes from a television script or a paperback novel. That's the reality of rural EMS today. All over the US, dedicated people in rural areas are experiencing EMS “up close and personal,” giving a lot more to their communities than their time and talent. The reality of rural EMS is that almost every patient is a friend, neighbor or relative. Could you handle a situation like that?

In rural EMS, every call has a direct impact on the EMS crew. Rural EMS providers aren't just running calls—they're taking care of their families and their friends. It's not an easy job. In one community, a well-liked elderly man, in physical and emotional pain from a chronic illness and the death of his wife, took his life. Everyone on the responding EMS crew took care of the sad but necessary task of determining that the gunshot wound had been fatal. How many urban EMTs have gone back to the home and cleaned up all of the blood so the shocked and grieving family wouldn't have to do it later? That's the reality of rural EMS. “We didn't want his relatives to go through that,” said one crewmember.

Rural EMS poses some clinical challenges that may not be present in urban situations. One difference is in response and transport time. Once the crew arrives on the scene and begins care there is the issue of transporting the patient to the hospital. Some rural counties are bigger than major cities, and even some states. That means rural EMS crews must often spend an hour or more with their patients during transport. Lengthy transport times often mean that patient conditions change during the trips to the hospital, and these changes must be handled enroute. There is no such thing as “scoop and swoop” in rural EMS. One mountain community medic put it well, “In the city, EMS crews can just transport their patients. We have to treat them too.” Another aspect of lengthy rural EMS transports is the contact between the EMS team and the patient. In rural EMS, ambulance crewmembers usually are transporting someone they know and who knows them. In that situation, you can't just take vitals and tell the patient: “Relax, we'll be at the hospital in a minute.”

Television shows and other media don't do justice to the kindhearted, highly professional people who provide EMS in rural areas all over the country. They work with limited resources and personnel shortages. They provide compassionate, competent EMS to their communities, sometimes in harsh and difficult weather and terrain conditions. They give care and comfort to people they know and love, and often pay a heavy emotional price for their compassion.

By Rich Adams, *Firehouse Magazine*, May 1995

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