

New Ambulance Service in Operation



On December 19th right on schedule, the 13 members of the new ambulance service of the Clear Lake Fire Department came on board.

Almost one year had passed since the commercial ambulance company announced that they were no longer

going to provide this service in Clear Lake. Immediately fire department members and city officials established temporary measures to provide Emergency Medical Service operations from the fire department and an agreement with the Mason City Fire Department to provide ambulance transportation.

Fire volunteers were divided into three squads to be on call in rotation from 10:00 PM through 6:00 AM, 7 days a week. All members would be on regular call for the remaining hours. They would respond in the rescue truck for each medical emergency to prepare the patient for possible ambulance transportation. Mason City would be paged out simultaneously.

Discussions began to create a permanent solution to the emergency service needs of the city. The city and the fire department developed plans with proposed costs for a paid professional squad, necessary equipment, and housing. It was hoped that such a city-operated system would be implemented within a year.

Because the firefighting and EMS personnel would be closely integrated in providing protection to the city residents, it was decided to bring the ambulance service in as full members of the fire department with the Fire Chief as administrator.

Cross-training would be provided to all members. Firefighters would provide backup to the ambulance squad for additional manpower. Since ambulance squad members would be on-duty 24/7 at the station, they would respond to all emergency calls. The few extra advance minutes arriving on the scene would allow the squad to radio back pertinent details to the responding firefighters who were preparing the rolling equipment for response. The squad would also assist at the incident and provide any emergency medical aid.

Qualifications for the new squad were developed. Initial operations

would have 3 full-time Paramedics and 10 part-time EMTs and Paramedics. Announcements were sent out for potential applicants. 39 responded. A physical test was run, and an interview team met with the 20 who completed the preliminary details. The top 13 were offered positions and accepted.

Much work was required by the volunteer firefighters and city employees to ready the facilities for the new ambulances and crews. Two members at a time reside at the station in shifts long enough to require sleep-time. Two sleeping rooms were created in the former evidence room of the police department on the station's balcony. A new evidence room was constructed on an existing platform there. Another platform was constructed in the department's equipment garage across from the station to hold less-used equipment. One engine from the station was moved to the garage to provide room for the two ambulances. Storage for spare ambulance supplies was created in the station.

Upon arrival of the new team, they laid out the vehicle's equipment and supplies. They also held training and street layout runs to familiarize themselves with the city's unusual road layout. They held several meetings with the firefighting squad to familiarize themselves with all of the firefighting equipment.

On January 2nd, the new service was in full operation with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. EMS Staff, Fire Suppression Staff, and city officials cut the fire-scene tape with EMT scissors.

