

HISTORY OF HAPPY CAMP VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SERVICE, INC.

In 1960 representatives of the Siskiyou County Hospital in Yreka asked the Happy Camp Volunteer Fire Department to accept a 1957 Ford station wagon with a gurney and first aid kit to serve as an ambulance for the Happy Camp area. The Board of Directors of the Happy Camp Fire Protection District felt that because of the liability they could not accept this as a part of the Fire District, however, they would have no objections if some of the volunteer firemen operated an ambulance service as long as it did not entail the use of any Fire District tax money. About eight or ten volunteer firemen were then in the ambulance business due to the need for an ambulance in this area.

In the beginning the vehicle was licensed under the County of Siskiyou for all insurance purposes and the County held the ownership certificate. Army and Navy surplus vehicles were used as it was soon found that the Ford station wagon was difficult to use due to lack of room for patient, or patients, plus attendant and medical supplies. Later, surplus vehicles also proved to be unsatisfactory as by the time they became surplus they were pretty well used and had lots of maintenance problems. The revenue from the trips was just enough to pay the expenses, plus some extra to pay on an up-dated vehicle. The volunteers would go to the local Scott Valley Bank and borrow on personal loans enough money to purchase a better vehicle and when it was paid off would buy more equipment. The ambulance service was able to add a second vehicle in the mid 1970's and the vehicles then being purchased were commercial used ambulances.

Frank Lootens, Fire Chief was the first Officer-in-charge of the ambulance along with firemen volunteers Bill Clapson, Jim Lootens, Clem White, Charles Smith and Wes Curtis and ex-Fire Chief David Titus. Then Frank Lootens moved from the area in 1968 Wes Curtis became Fire Chief and also was in charge of the ambulance service, and he has remained in that position since that date, although he retired as Fire Chief in 1984.

In the 1960's and 1970's and the early 1980's most of the patients were transported to Rogue Valley Medical Center in Medford, Oregon - 108 miles away - as the people from this area oriented to the Medford area for shopping, etc. This trip would take between 6 and 7 hours depending on the weather and road conditions. Now EMS regulations require that patient transport is to the nearest hospital, which is Siskiyou General Hospital in Yreka, unless the illness or injury is such that it cannot be taken care of there. The Paramedic also takes his orders from the ER physician there.

When Siskiyou County became self-insured in the early 1980's our ambulance service had to find our own insurance. This one item has proved to be very costly especially when insurance costs jumped so high five years ago as they did for everyone. At the present time the insurance is approximately \$6,200.00 per year.

In 1979 through as Office of Traffic Safety Grant and Nor-Cal EMS in Redding, Happy Camp received a \$25,000.00 towards the purchase of a new type III ambulance. We paid the balance of \$5,000.00, plus money needed to equip this vehicle. This ambulance is a 1979 Ford Braun 1 ton and is fully equipped with extracation equipment for motor vehicle accidents. This type of Grant is no longer available to us as Nor-Cal EMS became a non-profit corporation itself and cannot jointly license vehicles.

The Ambulance Service officially became a Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation with the State of California in 1983. These documents state that if this service is ever sold the money must go to another governmental agency or non-profit organization for the good of this community.

Due to the many changes in the laws governing ambulance services state-wide, the early volunteers who started out as first aiders, then trained in advanced first aid have now taken lots of additional training to become Emergency Medical Techicians. Regulations have become more strict for drivers also. Happy Camp Volunteer Ambulance Service is a Basic Life Support Ambulance Service excepting when Paramedic David Eisenberg is aboard and then it is Advanced Life Support. Two years ago this ambulance service was fortunate to receive a Heart Start through a grant to Siskiyou General Hospital from the McConnell Foundation in Redding. All of our ambulance crew have been trained to use this piece of life-saving equipment and are EMT-D's.

All volunteer organizations go through peaks and valleys in staffing as volunteers move in and out of the area, or are just tired of the on-call status. Happy Camp Volunteer Ambulance Service has been fortunate to have been able to keep recruiting motivated and highly dedicated people to take on this stressful non-paying job that many times takes them away from their work and their family.

In 1988 a new Ford van ambulance was purchased with the proceeds of money earned by the volunteers on the forest fires in 1987. The cost was \$44,000.00, plus the new equipment purchased for the vehicle. At this time major mechanical work was done on the 1979 Ford Braun.

The staffing now consists of the following EMT-I's/EMT-D's:

Wes Curtis	1960	retired businessman/driver-attendant.
Marion Curtis	1975	office worker/housewife - driver/attendant.
Sherry Crawford	1988	logging business - driver/attendant.
Edward Domanski	1990	U.S.Forest Service - driver/attendant.
David Eisenberg	1981	P.H.N. Karuk Tribe - Paramedic.
Paul Gross	1987	U.S. Forest Service - driver/attendant.
Bill Heitler	1989	U.S. forest Service - driver/attendant.
Kathie Kitchen	1989	School Bus Driver - driver/attendant.
Jim Lauritzen	1978	retired businessman - attendant.
Chris Lohn	1992	Restaurant employee - driver/attendant.
Carol Sharp	1989	U.S. Forest Service - driver attendant.
Kathy Toland	1992	U.S. Forest Service - driver/attendant.
Sara Wills	1991	U.S. Forest Service - driver/-attendant.

There is only one doctor who lives in the area. Dr. Michels at the Happy Camp Health Servies, and after-hours care by a doctor is not available so the job of the ambulance service becomes more improtant to this community. These non-paid volunteers continue their 24 hour committment to the area as they have done for the past 32 years.
