

EMS Strike team (Surge) Update

Louisiana Response

October 2005

EMMCO West EMS Strike team Is Deployed

The region's EMS strike team (surge) was formed as a result of post 9/11 restructuring of the emergency response system to catastrophic events. On October 1, 2005, four ALS ambulances from the EMMCO West region joined five ALS ambulances and three support vehicles from the EMSI region for a 1300 mile trek to Baton Rouge, LA. The crews were part of a 20 ambulance vehicle deployment from across the state. Statewide this was the second coordinated response to Louisiana. The first deployment occurred immediately following hurricane Katrina and involved 20 ALS ambulances from Harrisburg and Allentown.

The State of Louisiana made a formal request to Pennsylvania for these ambulances. Each crew consists of four personnel, two paramedics and two EMTs. The crews work 12 hour shifts at assigned locations by Louisiana emergency management officials and FEMA.

Crews have been transporting dialysis patients and other special needs patients between shelters and hospital facilities. Additionally they are assisting military and DMAT teams providing care at the shelters.

The four ALS services from the EMMCO West region are Clarion Hospital EMS, Meadville Area Ambulance Service, Millcreek Paramedic Service, and Shenango Valley Area Ambulance Service. Paramedic Mike Gambatese is the EMMCO West strike team leader and is a member of Pennsylvania's EMS Incident Command structure in Louisiana.

In speaking with Mike, the teams are working well with each other and the weather is hot, but not too bad.

The crews are expected to return to Western PA on October 17, 2005.



Nine Western PA EMS Strike teams leave Washington, PA on October 1 for deployment to Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Strike Team Needed In EMMCO West

An additional ambulance strike team is needed in the EMMCO West region. The PA Department of Health has attained funding for the creation of regional ambulance strike teams. EMMCO West currently has funding to support seven strike teams and currently only has six teams.

In the event of a catastrophic emergency event that overwhelms a local, regional, or statewide EMS system, the strike team ambulances would be activated to respond to that emergency situation. The EMS strike team is coordinated by the PA Department of Health, through the PA Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). A nation-wide agreement (EMAC) enables states to share emergency resources and makes provisions for reimbursement of expenses incurred by the strike teams.

The PA Department of Health is providing a \$5,000 grant in FY 05 - 06 to all PA EMS strike teams. This funding is used to immunize strike team members, acquire personal protective equipment, response uniforms, response equipment / supplies, and supplement training activities for the strike team members. Each strike team is to have a minimum of six team members. During a deployment, only four members are requested.

EMMCO West provides additional support to the regional EMS strike teams through its MCI trailer and regional training programs (i.e. symposium, tabletop drills, and disaster drills). The regional MCI trailer provides the resources necessary for the strike teams to establish an EMS incident command post / triage area.

Contact Melissa Thompson at 814-337-5380 or mthompson@emmco.org if your service is interested in participating in the EMMCO West EMS Strike Team.



EMMCO West's Regional EMS Strike Teams



**Shenango Valley
Area Ambulance
Service**