

## TIP Celebrates 20 Years of Compassionate Service!

**T**rauma Intervention Programs (TIP) of San Diego County, Inc. is a non-profit, volunteer organization of specially trained citizen volunteers who provide immediate emotional and practical support to victims and their families in the first few hours following a tragedy. This year commemorates the 20th anniversary of TIP volunteers serving San Diego communities and partner agencies in crisis intervention.

In the hours following a traumatic event, victims and survivors often feel hopeless, confused, and in emotional shock. They are confronted with a dire situation for which they are totally unprepared, and they may feel devastated. Police officers, firefighters, or paramedics on scene are often busy with their own duties and responsibilities and find it difficult to provide meaningful emotional support to the victims and



TIP SAN DIEGO

**The TIP Crisis Team Manager Mandy Atkission meets with members of the Carlsbad (CA) Fire Department Station #5. Trauma Intervention Programs (TIP) of San Diego County, the first of 20 Volunteer chapters nationwide that provide emotional and practical support to victims of tragedy, celebrated its 20th Anniversary this year.**



### CONTACT INFORMATION

#### ■ SUBSCRIPTIONS

800-231-8911 or 714-544-7776 or  
email [subscriptions@9-1-1magazine.com](mailto:subscriptions@9-1-1magazine.com).

#### ■ EDITORIAL

Email [editor@9-1-1magazine.com](mailto:editor@9-1-1magazine.com).

#### ■ BACK ISSUES and REPRINTS

800-231-8911 or  
email [publisher@9-1-1magazine.com](mailto:publisher@9-1-1magazine.com).

#### ■ DISPLAY ADS

Pamela Martin at 425-836-3931 or  
email [pamela@9-1-1magazine.com](mailto:pamela@9-1-1magazine.com).

#### ■ CLASSIFIED OR OPPORTUNITY ADS

Jackie Voelkl at 800-231-8911 or  
email [jackie@9-1-1magazine.com](mailto:jackie@9-1-1magazine.com).

Visit us at [www.9-1-1magazine.com](http://www.9-1-1magazine.com)

survivors. This can be very frustrating to both emergency responders and the victims, and there may be no one else available in the immediate aftermath of a tragedy to guide the victims through these difficult hours.

This is when the TIP volunteer is called in by emergency services personnel. Without the TIP volunteer present, the victims or survivors of a tragedy may be left to fend for themselves at a time when they are emotionally traumatized, and least capable of thinking clearly or rationally.

Trauma Intervention Programs of San Diego County, Inc. was founded in 1985 by Wayne Fortin who was associated with San Diego Mental Health. Fortin recognized that if victims of tragic events don't receive immediate on-scene emotional and practical support they risk suffering a lifelong emotional second injury. "Emergency personnel don't have the time to provide the 'emotionally wounded' with the support they need, and family members and friends are either not on scene or if they are they don't know what to do," Fortin told *9-1-1 Magazine*,

adding that "the inability of public safety personnel to care for the emotionally wounded is a major stressor for police officers and firefighters."

Fortin recruited citizen volunteers and trained them to meet the emotional and practical needs of those who were experiencing stress symptoms from a traumatic event. TIP's slogan, "Citizens helping Citizens in Crisis" aptly captures the spirit of the program as trained volunteers respond to emergency situations 7 days per week, 24 hours per day, and usually arrive at the scene of an incident within 20 minutes.

"We use TIP as a resource that allows our personnel to more effectively and efficiently deal with situations because we know our community will receive critical emotional support," said Fire Chief David H. Burk of the La Mesa (CA) Fire Department, which began utilizing TIP volunteers about ten years ago. "TIP's services decrease our on scene times therefore providing improved emergency availability. Having TIP provides peace of mind to our responders while providing an enhanced service level to our citizens."



In 1991, TIP was the recipient of a \$100,000 Harvard University and Ford Foundation grants for earning an "Innovation in State and Local Government Award." These funds were used to introduce the TIP program to other cities and jurisdictions. There are now 20 TIP Chapters serving 250 cities throughout the United States.

"TIP is a tremendous service enhancement for your community and emergency responders," said La Mesa's Chief Burk. "It allows you to provide emotional support and assistance during a time of crisis. It completes the circle of

care and minimizes the emotional injuries of your citizens."

[www.tipsandiego.org](http://www.tipsandiego.org)

## NENA To Develop Telecommunicator Emergency Response Teams

One of the most critical issues to emerge in the wake of Hurricane Katrina is the need for states to be ready to systematically deploy trained, recognized teams of telecommunicators whenever a local PSAP infrastructure is compromised by a natural disaster or terrorist event. The National Emergency Number

Association (NENA) is spearheading a national effort to address this need.

In addition to several other states, North Carolina is a recognized leader in this area with its TERT program (Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce). After Katrina struck, the N.C. TERT received a formal request through the state Office of Emergency Management within the national Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to deploy and assist with PSAP staffing in St. Tammany's Parish in Louisiana. (Through EMAC, a congressionally ratified organization that pro-

## EMS Interoperability in Georgia

By Joel Greenberg

**B**ased out of Savannah Georgia's Memorial Health System, MedStarOne is one of the largest contractors of ambulance/EMS, helicopter, and specialized medic services, straddling a four-county region that includes Chatham, Screven, Toombs, and Montgomery Counties.

Systems administrator Captain Ray Mercer, who manages the dispatch center and communications for MedStarOne, said "for years we attempted to have area wide communications, but because of the multiple radio systems and equipment used by the different jurisdictions throughout our service area we weren't successful."

MedStarOne's computer aided dispatch and helicopter dispatch for on-scene and inter-hospital transport, needed to be able communicate with the fire/EMS and police dispatch in the other counties agencies, which included a 800 MHz trunked system.

Looking for a way to establish area-wide coverage, Mercer took the innovative approach of creating a "common-denominator" platform by switching to SouthernLINC Wireless – a direct-connect radio system similar to Nextel that operates in Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The SouthernLINC system, which includes public safety group, blankets the entire area served by MedStarOne.

To ensure there was reciprocal communications between MedStarOne's SouthernLINC radios and the county 800 MHz system, Mercer added the "Incident Commanders' Radio Inter-

face" (ICRI), a tactical radio interoperability device that would bridge the systems and connect the voice traffic. This satisfied the dual goals of having a unified, company-wide system, and a way to interconnect to other agencies. It also substantially reduced their cost and duplication of equipment: instead of purchasing one or two \$5,000+ radios for each of their 30 vehicles, they would only need one 800 MHz radio mated to the ICRI to create the interconnect. The SouthernLINC radios cost about \$300, which makes replacing or upgrading to new radios very economical.

In the event of a natural disaster or mass casualty situation, where MedStarOne might need additional range and interoperability, they're building a mobile communications unit that includes an ICRI. This will allow them to reach nearly any incident location and to connect with UHF (450 MHz) and AM aircraft radios. Located near Hunter Army Airfield, Fort Steward and Coast Guard units in Savannah and Charleston, MedStarOne has an abundance of air support available but needed a way to communicate and maneuver multiple aircraft using this cross-band capability.

MedStarOne's helicopter can now talk on its SouthernLINC radio to public safety agencies through the ICRI. As soon as they lift off they'll have communications with those other agencies, even if they're 70 miles away.

Mercer's organization has 30 units active on the street (40, including support vehicles). Savannah has about 50 patrol



MEDSTARONE



**Use of the SouthernLINC radio system keeps Medics from Georgia's MedStarOne connected to allied agencies, with interoperability enhanced by the Incident Commander's Radio Interface.**

cars, and 7 fire stations, so they now have the interoperability with them as well.

In the future, if MedStarOne expands and contracts for service in another county, it will be a simple matter of installing a couple of SouthernLINC radios in a vehicle and they'll be operational. And to be compatible with any other radio system they might encounter, they'll only need the ICRI.

*Joel Greenberg, principal of DCPR, a communications consultancy based in Washington D.C., writes articles on public safety, homeland security and technology.*