

capable of receiving wireless and conventional phone calls, which results in the ability to provide better service and to save lives.”

TTY-PASS has an annual fee of \$75 per TTY, which includes unlimited testing. More information on the system is available at nena.org

Flight Nurse's Family Urges Action On EMS Helicopter Safety

The family of Erin Reed, a flight nurse killed Sept. 29, 2005 when the Airlift Northwest EMS helicopter she was working aboard crashed into Puget Sound, is demanding action now to stop the escalating rate of EMS air ambu-

lance fatalities.

Reed, a 24-year veteran of the EMS community, was killed along with flight nurse Lois Suzuki and veteran pilot Steve Smith. Suzuki was a highly respected pediatric flight nurse who worked all over the world. Smith had logged over 8,500 hours of flight time with Airlift Northwest after serving as a

Mobile, Modular Command Centers Enhance Disaster Opts

Because emergencies happen in countless ways in every environment, response equipment needs to be equally versatile. Current incident fleets aren't there yet, but technology is: composite command post shelter construction.

“Composite technology is important so we have a structure that is strong, light and that can stand rapid deployment,” said Dr. Van Romero, vice president of research and economic development at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech). Romero oversees the operations of the Playas Research and Training Center in Playas, NM, which trains military, public, and private first-response teams among other projects. “I think when we look at command centers now from a homeland security standpoint, we want to make sure we have access to the most recent technological developments.”

An emerging technology, lightweight, exceptionally strong composite shelters make for the fastest and most durable incident command centers. With chemical/biological, ballistic, and EMI protection, composite shelters can also offer safety in the most variable and dangerous environments. Add to this their long life cycles and customization options, and you have a remarkably flexible solution capable of ensuring the readiness required by today's incident response teams.

“You don't want to limit the capabilities of your response system, and composites are the lightest, strongest materials that can perform in virtually any situation,” said Gerald Myers, CEO of Alkan Shelter, an Alaska-based company that makes composite shelters for military, homeland security, scientific and communications clients. “A composite shelter's



ALKAN SHELTERS

Whether they are mounted on a Unimog like this shelter that Alkan designed for Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico or containerized, portable/mobile shelters like these can provide an instant command center or mobile EOC for almost any environment or event.

materials allow it to accommodate any transport carrier, so it can go anywhere quickly and be functional in a wide variety of environments — and threats to homeland security arrive in all conditions.”

Because composite shelters have a lifespan measurable in decades, they prove better investments than aluminum-skin shelters with about half the shelf life. Composites are also inherently corrosion resistant and easy to repair — important considerations for emergency response equipment that must survive the rigors of transport and deployment in any environment. When a response unit goes from coordinating mountain wildfire communications to managing coastal storm recovery, its equipment should be able to withstand the extremes of each for many years.

Joseph Valdez, electronic technician at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), can attest to the strength and longevity of composites. As part of a team procuring a customized mobile control room/nuclear response vehicle for LANL, Valdez helped identify Alkan's Vehicle Shelter — a shelter he has used in LANL exercises for nearly a decade. “It's a unique vehicle — custom built as

a control room on a Unimog. It's pretty much zero maintenance on the shelter; it still looks like new,” Valdez said. “It being easy to clean, maintain and transport were advantages for us; the composite itself is light, and it can be lifted by helicopter and flown by different aircraft. Also, it's a sterile environment inside and it would be easy to decontaminate in case of a nuclear incident.”

The equipment in mobile command centers is, of course, critical to any incident team's ability to manage an emergency situation. Yet, while communications technology has advanced by leaps and bounds, it is still being operated from shelters whose improvements have been more static. Ensuring equipment protection in a rugged, environmentally conditioned “envelope” allows it to function better for longer.

“What is really important in this is the functioning of the equipment. The equipment cost is the same if you put it in a shelter for 10 years or for 30 years, so it should be put in something that has a long life,” Alkan's Myers said. “Of course, technology will change and missions will change, and shelters should be able to accommodate that.”

Alkan Shelter's mobile command units currently are designed with “plug-and-play” SMART technology, but Alkan also builds them for systems yet to be developed; the ability to remodel and refit command units with constantly evolving technology is important in a shelter that's operational for up to 30 years. Composites are ideally suited to modular construction and integrated interior components, making composite shelters easy to outfit — and re-outfit — with the most up-to-date technology.

www.alkanshelter.com