

Chatham Emergency Squad

Annual Report for 2014



Connie Hartman
Captain

Introduction

Chatham Emergency Squad, Inc. (CES) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation founded in 1936 providing basic emergency medical services to the Chathams, responding to approximately 1100 emergency medical calls per year. Members are all volunteers and we never charge for our services. CES funds come primarily from donations, augmented by a small amount of annual funding from Chatham Borough and Chatham Township, with occasional grants from local organizations for equipment purchases. We also benefit from worker's compensation insurance provided by Chatham Borough and Chatham Township. We can be found on the internet at chathamemergencysquad.org.

Affiliation

The Chatham Emergency Squad is a private self-governing corporation unaffiliated with any municipality or agency. We are a member of the New Jersey State First Aid Council and cooperate closely with the following local organizations:

- Chatham Borough Police Department
- Chatham Township Police Department
- Chatham Borough Fire Department
- Chatham Township Volunteer Fire Department
- Green Village Volunteer Fire Department
- Atlantic Health System
- Morris County EMS Captains Alliance
- Morris County Communications Center

Beyond cooperation in the field, CES provides the police with medical supplies such as oxygen and masks. We also create and file the appropriate reports when police defibrillators are used. In 2014 we are also continuing a project to assure annual CPR recertification for all police officers, firefighters, and DPW workers in both Chatham Township and Chatham Borough.

Mission

The mission of the Chatham Emergency Squad has six major elements:

- To render basic emergency life support and ambulance transportation for Chatham Borough and Township residents and visitors in the event of accident or sudden illness.
- To transport Chatham residents whose health requires non-emergency ambulance transportation to and from hospitals or nursing homes (when such transport can be accomplished without reducing emergency coverage below acceptable levels)
- To render assistance to Chatham residents in such matters as moving helpless, sick, injured, or elderly people to and from automobiles or upper floors of homes.
- To provide an on-site ambulance and crew for community events (such as football games, road races, and other sports events) where the likelihood of injury is heightened.
- To participate in emergency disaster work as requested by emergency management authorities and to provide firefighter rehabilitation at fire scenes.
- To assist neighboring communities when their squads cannot respond.

Qualifications and Training

Every CES member providing patient care is certified by the State of New Jersey as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). This certification requires completion of an extensive training course of over 200 hours, culminating in the New Jersey State qualifying test. EMTs are trained in basic emergency-care skills including cardiopulmonary resuscitation, defibrillation, using airway adjuncts, oxygen therapy, first aid, splinting, assisting patients with certain medications, administering epinephrine via Squad-owned epi-pens, and lifting and moving patients. Members are even taught how to deliver babies and have exercised that skill on several occasions, though not recently.

EMTs must recertify periodically, currently every five years, by taking a mandated number of State-certified continuing-education courses and refresher courses. CES hosts such courses at our facility periodically. Many CES members greatly exceed the required minimum number of courses and seek the broadest possible training.

The standards of CES membership are considerably more rigorous than simply earning a State EMT certification. New members enter as “probationary members” and must demonstrate an understanding of CES protocols and prove key skills in the field before being promoted to certified status, a process that takes up to 18 months.

Highlights of 2014

- Developed a formal Ebola (EVD) procedures document and employed it in a timely manner to guide the Squad’s operations during the EVD crisis. The Squad was able to procure necessary Personal Protective Equipment to protect against EVD exposure and laid out a detailed plan for EVD response in regard to patient care, transport, and proper donning and doffing techniques of PPE to reduce the risk of responder contamination.
- Conducted CPR classes for educational and citizens groups at no charge. Also continued a project to assure annual CPR recertification for all Chatham responders regardless of their agency. This initiative includes police departments, fire departments, Public Works Departments as well as Chatham school nurses, teachers, and coaches. A web-based system of records has been developed to support the management of this training, allowing departmental members to register for classes, and allowing departmental training officers to view the certification status of every member of their department. This CPR training will be augmented by training of police officers and firefighters in rudimentary first aid and in the use of Squad equipment on scene. This initiative will save its Chatham clients about \$20,000/year, at a cost to the Squad of \$3000/year.
- Conducted multiple drills with fire departments and supported several working fires by providing patient care and firefighter rehabilitation.
- Procured a new ambulance to replace the oldest of our three ambulances. Delivery was taken in January 2014.
- Recruited 9 new members, and cadet members, to offset attrition.
- Initiated the process to allow CES to carry and use Narcan for opiate overdoses. The state requires at least 90% of all squad members to be trained in NARCAN administration and CES was able to comply within 6 months of the program’s start

Operations

In 2014, CES responded to 1083 dispatches, about 4% more than the prior year. The dispatches included 581 to the Township, 483 to the Borough, and 19 as mutual aid to other towns.

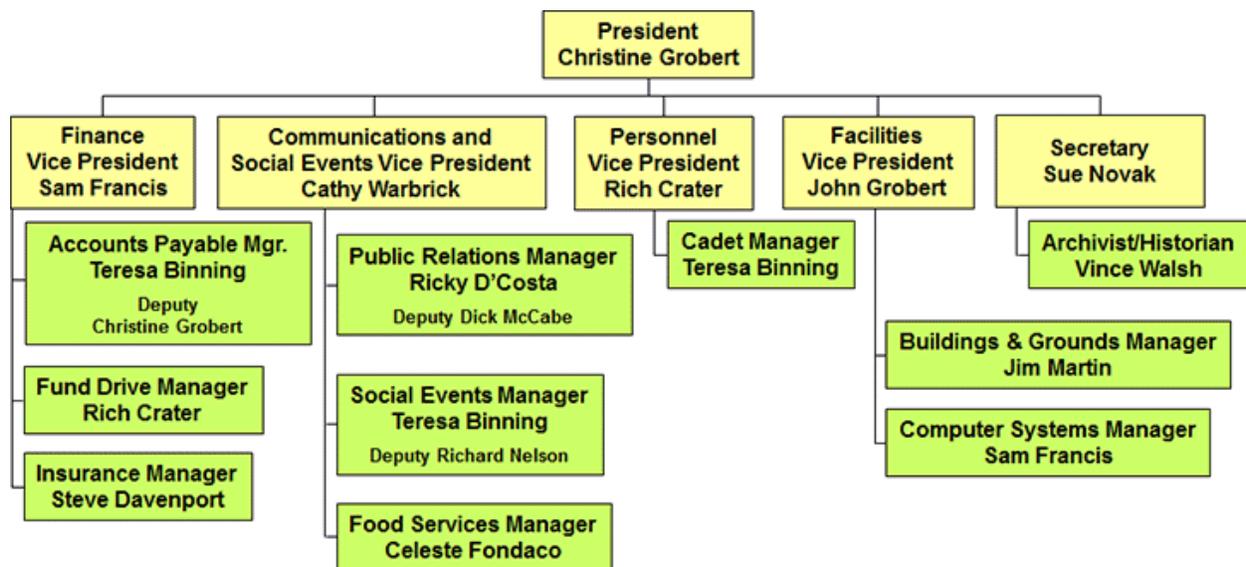
The 1083 total includes 55 dispatches to Juniper Village, 33 to King James Care Center, 1 to Garden Terrace Nursing Home. This total of 89 dispatches to elder-care facilities is a 10% decrease from the prior year.

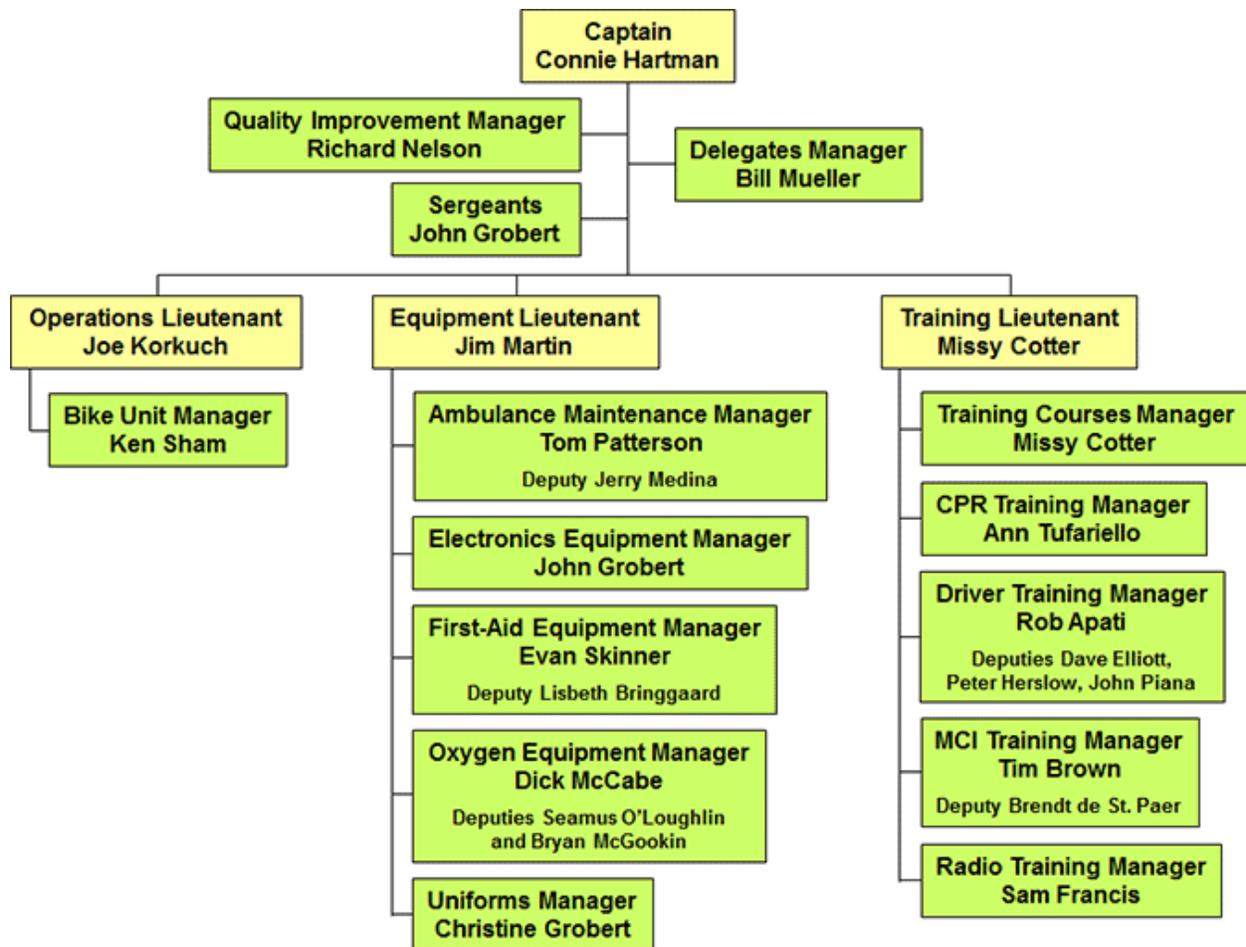
CES responded to 646 medical calls (where the patient is ill) and 339 trauma calls (where the patient is injured). The remaining calls were 13 dispatches to fire scenes, 16 non-emergency patient transports, and 69 other miscellaneous calls.

In addition to these emergency and patient service calls, CES also provided ambulance coverage and EMT presence at CHS home varsity football games and community gatherings such as parades, street fairs, road races, and graduations. This presence is often bolstered and made more flexible by the deployment of the Bike Unit.

Our Quality Improvement Manager monitors our field operations by managing a reviewing committee which assesses every written Patient Care Report to enhance performance and documentation. Ongoing feedback, training, and suggestions are provided to crew chiefs and their crews. Operations are supported by four operational Lieutenants and four administrative Vice Presidents who supervise 21 member-staffed managerial functions. Time spent on emergency calls is but a small fraction of the service given by the members to maintain the enterprise.

Our organizational structure is led by a President, who is the chief administrative officer, and a Captain, who is the chief operations officer. The organization chart is shown below.





As has long been the case, the role of the Squad in the community is greater than its explicit mission. In 2014, CES sponsored four blood drives in Chatham, yielding 101 pints of blood. CES sponsored free CPR and first aid courses for residents. The holiday “Snow Village” was enjoyed by the public through a series of open houses. CES hosted numerous building and ambulance tours for local groups including Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. All of these activities will continue in 2015.

Membership Status

A sufficient number of new members joined in 2014 to keep the Squad at full strength, and then some. CES has 90 members in the following categories:

- 46 full-time members (certified and probationary) serving 12-hour weekly shifts plus weekend duty
- 13 cadets who are high-school students serving one 3-hour shift per week
- 5 members on leave of absence
- 15 auxiliary members helping with the administrative burdens of the Squad
- 10 students away at college or graduate school
- 1 physician member.

These numbers are essentially the same as a year ago.

While the current membership of the Squad is strong, CES is not immune to the factors negatively impacting, and in some cases imperiling, volunteer ambulance companies in neighboring communities and across the state. The Squad prides itself on its spirit of “neighbors helping neighbors.” Thanks to this spirit and the strength of membership, the Squad is able to respond in almost all instances to “duty-crew-out” calls with a second or third ambulance as needed without having to rely on mutual aid from adjacent towns. Retaining current members and attracting new members remains one of the greatest priorities of the organization.

Financial Status

CES financial resources come from four sources:

- Voluntary contributions, mostly from Chatham residents, merchants and civic organizations.
- Bequests and “in memory of” gifts.
- Funding from the Borough of Chatham and Township of Chatham municipal governments (each providing about 5% of annual expenses).
- Special-purpose grants received from the municipalities, private foundations, and charitable organizations.

The Squad’s annual fund drive is a community-wide appeal primarily through direct mail. At present, total income meets current needs, including ambulance purchases, and there are no financial issues.

In addition to providing some funding for operations, Chatham Borough and Chatham Township jointly fund the Squad’s Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP), which is a nominal monetary recognition of an individual Squad member’s service to the community. The Squad also benefits from worker’s compensation insurance provided by Chatham Borough and Chatham Township

Assets

CES owns and operates three ambulances, replaced periodically to limit each ambulance’s service life to a targeted ten years.

CES owns two buildings: one at 45 Spring Street in the Township (housing two ambulances) and another at 31 N. Passaic Avenue in the Borough (housing one ambulance). Both facilities are in excellent condition with the Borough facility having undergone a major upgrade in 2005 – 2006.

Our other assets are the customary equipment for an enterprise of our type, such as radios, pagers, bicycles, office equipment, computers, and first-aid equipment and supplies.

Trends

One significant trend affecting all New Jersey EMS providers is the accelerating cost of training, which is driving many squads to start billing for their services. The New Jersey State Training Fund has not been adequately funded during the recent financial downturn in New Jersey, pushing the cost of training new EMTs onto the squads' budgets. The cost per student to train and certify a new EMT is \$1500. When multiplied by the number of new members per year, this cost is unaffordable by many squads who, as a result, have been forced to start billing their patients. This trend, when coupled with the downward trend in the availability of sufficient volunteers in many towns, is driving the business model for EMS away from pure volunteer squads offering free patient care, and toward paid squads who bill for their services.

The Chatham Emergency Squad, while not immune to these trends, benefits from the extraordinary generosity of Chatham citizens both in donations to the Squad and in volunteering to serve as members. As a result, despite these adverse trends which are impacting most squads in New Jersey, our financial situation is as strong as or stronger than it has ever been, as is our cadre of members. We do not foresee having to move to a paid-squad model or a bill-for-service model in the foreseeable future.

Future Plans

- Maintain our high standard of patient care. CES will continue to enhance its Quality Improvement activities and avail itself of the best possible training for its members.
- Train our members in the expanded scope of practice which New Jersey has recently implemented for EMTs at our level.
- Continue and enhance our practice of an annual fund drive to assure that we have the resources to maintain and improve our physical plant and ambulance fleet and cover our operating expenses in the face of rising training costs.

Summary

The Chatham Emergency Squad is in excellent condition in terms of membership, finances, and physical plant. It is a strong and proud organization committed to its mission. There are no immediate issues or concerns of which our stakeholders in the community should be aware.