

EMS Profile by Doug Carlyle, LP,
NREMT-P

EMS Profile: Utopia Volunteer EMS

About us: EMS in Utopia began with a challenge. After a local resident lost her father to a heart attack more than thirty years ago, she began training and reached the level of EMT-Special Skills. She challenged another resident to be her driver if she passed the state exam. He accepted the challenge. She passed. The Utopia branch of Uvalde County EMS was formed on April 1, 1976. In 1979, Uvalde County EMS split into four separate entities, one of which was Utopia Volunteer EMS. Today, we are the EMS provider serving the Utopia-Vanderpool ESD #1. The service area is 450 square miles, spanning portions of Bandera, Uvalde, Real and Medina Counties. The ESD serves approximately 1,750 citizens, and it experiences frequent rushes of visitors enjoying the region's equine, rodeo, hunting, bicycling, motorcycling, mountain climbing, hiking and swimming activities.

Number of units and personnel:

Thanks to generous and continuing donations from residents, visitors, businesses and organizations; grant monies; and endless community support, Utopia Volunteer EMS has grown to include a total of 17 medics: one ECA, 12 EMT-basics, three EMT-intermediates and one paramedic. We operate two BLS/MICU capable units: a 2002 American-LaFrance MedicMaster and a 2009 AEV Trauma Hawk. We have one advanced-level medic on duty at the station from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week. Other personnel are volunteers. Ann Burgardt, MD, is our medical director.

Number of calls and unit

capabilities: The organization has experienced an EMS call volume of over 200 runs per year for the last four years. As necessary, Utopia Volunteer EMS teams up with Air Evac Lifeteam or San Antonio Airlife for air transport of injured patients. Currently, 18 percent of patients are flown to San Antonio. With the appropriate personnel on board, Utopia Volunteer EMS has the following advanced-care capabilities on both



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Office of EMS Trauma/Systems MC 1876
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Utopia Volunteer EMS provides service to 450 square miles in portions of Bandera, Uvalde, Real and Medina Counties. Counterclockwise from top: John Hillis, Betty Boyce, Tim Ahrens, Cody Davis, Patti McCaleb, Rhonda Gobert, Kani Darden, Linda Andrade, Janna Davis, Debbie Goodner, Doug Carlyle, Jennifer Davis, Gary Davis. Photo by Hattie Barham.

units: CPAP, mechanical respiratory ventilation, ETT and King advanced airway, needle cricothyrotomy, chest decompression and conscious sedation. In all, the system carries 42 different medications, including a variety of analgesic and seizure medications. Paralytics are available to maintain advanced airways. Zoll E-Series 12-lead ECG, three anti-dysrhythmics, two beta-blockers and nitro-drips are carried for advanced cardiac care. Patients are transported on Stryker PowerPro XT stretchers.

Medic safety: The latest fleet addition has safety harnesses at two locations on the bench seat, as well as at the CPR seat and captain's chair. The interior of the module was designed

to minimize impact points in the event of a collision. A camera system views the patient compartment and the rear of the truck. Each truck has real-time GPS tracking and route mapping.

Current activities: Utopia Volunteer EMS has been instrumental in obtaining AEDs for the region's churches, schools, senior citizen center, parks and fire departments. We offer citizen CPR training on a regular basis, and blood pressure checks are provided weekly at several locations. Grant monies have been carefully spent to purchase all types of training manikins, and we are a local clearinghouse for donated in-home medical equipment. Utopia Volunteer EMS also provides medical care at all special events in the region.