

# UNYAN Coordinates Deployment of Ambulances to Gulf Coast

The United New York Ambulance Network is coordinating an effort to send 25 ambulances from around New York State to the Gulf Coast.

The response is part of an organized effort requested by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, coordinated by the American Ambulance Association in conjunction with UNYAN, the state's commercial ambulance trade association.

UNYAN Secretary, Trish Hansen, is coordinating the 30-day deployment for UNYAN.

"We received notice Saturday night that FEMA was requesting ambulances from New York," Hansen said. UNYAN has a disaster response plan, developed as a result of the World Trade Center disaster, which was immediately activated.

The following UNYAN member companies left Sunday for the two-day trip the Gulf Coast:

- Bangs Ambulance, Ithaca, sent one ALS ambulance
- Citywide Mobile Response, Bronx, sent one BLS ambulance
- Erway Ambulance, Elmira, sent two ALS ambulances
- Finger Lakes Ambulance, Clifton Springs, sent one ALS Ambulance
- Guilfoyle Ambulance, Watertown, sent one ALS ambulance
- Mohawk Ambulance, Albany, sent one BLS ambulance
- Monroe Ambulance, Rochester, sent two ALS ambulances
- Mobile Life Support, Newburgh, sent two ALS ambulances and one support vehicle
- Regional EMS, Middletown, sent two ALS ambulances
- Richmond County Ambulance, Staten Island, sent one ALS ambulance
- Trans Am Ambulance, Olean, sent one ALS ambulance and one support vehicle
- TransCare, New York City, sent 10 ALS and BLS ambulances

"When the call went out for assistance, our member companies immediately stepped up to the plate to help," said Mark Zeek, UNYAN Chairman.

"Some companies were not able to send ambulances for such a lengthy deployment, and they are assisting us locally with coordinating the effort," Zeek added.

In addition to medical supplies, the ambulances and support vehicles were stocked with other supplies as FEMA indicated that all providers must be self sufficient for 7-days, requiring them to have sufficient food, water, housing, etc.

The ambulances traveled to Baton Rouge, La. where FEMA has established a staging area. FEMA, working with the American Ambulance Association and UNYAN has mustered approximately 300 ambulances from around the country for the relief effort.

Ambulances will be dispatched to various areas in the Gulf Coast, including Texas, where thousands of displaced residents from New Orleans have been given shelter.

“The number of companies that responded to the call for help is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of the ambulance industry,” said Jim McPartlon, of Mohawk Ambulance. McPartlon is the President-elect of the American Ambulance Association and is assisting UNYAN with the deployment.

UNYAN is handling as many logistics locally as possible for the New York contingent, including finding overnight accommodations for the trip down in Virginia and Alabama, finding a way to send replacement crews mid-way through the activation and keeping in daily contact with the association command structure on-site.

“One of our challenges is to find a way to send replacement crews in either 10 or 15 day intervals. The situation down there is so extreme that we want to make sure our personnel can get back to their families in a reasonable amount of time,” Hansen said,

“Cell phones more than likely will not work in the disaster area, fortunately, one of our members has a satellite phone and they will be contacting me every day to report on the status of the ambulances,” she added.

UNYAN is also in contact with the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of EMS on the deployment.

“The Department of Health staff has been outstanding, providing us with a lot of valuable information and advice,” Hansen said.

In these times of need, everyone wants to help. “Unfortunately, those who are not part of an organized effort sanctioned by FEMA and go down to the area just add to the problems,” said David Butler, UNYAN Board member.

Sunday night the ambulances stayed at a National Guard Armory in Virginia and Monday night they stayed in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Hansen contacted NorthShore Paramedics in Tuscaloosa to try to find housing for the contingent of ambulances and they immediately made arrangements for food and housing. “They were outstanding,” Hansen said.

One of the issues UNYAN dealt with is trying to find fuel for the ambulances so they can make their way to Baton Rouge.

“Obviously, fuel is an issue. We had hoped that FEMA would be able to make arrangements for fuel, but that wasn’t possible so we had to connect with ambulance services enroute to find fuel,” Hansen said.

“UNYAN’s efforts are a unique in that we have an organized deployment and are providing support locally for issues that crop up,” Hansen said.

The ambulances arrived in Baton Rouge, at approximately 1 p.m. local time Tuesday. They have set up at the staging area and are awaiting assignments. UNYAN’s on-site commander is Andy LaMarca of Mobile Life Support, Newburgh. He indicated that some units received orders Wednesday and traveled to New Orleans to assist with efforts there.

“Our operation is going smoothly because we have a good command structure both on-site and in New York,” Zeek said. “Andy’s experience has been invaluable in a situation like this,” he added.