

Special Apparatus-- Major Emergency Response Vehicles

by Battalion Chief John A. Calderone

FDNY and EMS merged into one agency on March 17, 1996. In addition to a fleet of hundreds of basic and advanced life support ambulances, also included in the merger were several EMS special units. Among these are four Major Emergency Response Vehicles (MERV). These units originally were designated as Mobile Emergency Room Vans and responded to multiple casualty incidents with a hospital medical staff. These vehicles are configured as a mobile emergency room, similar to the large Mobile Medical Units formerly operated by the FDNY.

Today's MERVs carry a host of medical supplies and equipment that includes immobilization equipment, patient transfer equipment, airway equipment, an extensive supply of dressings and bandages, semi-automatic external defibrillators, advanced life support equipment, pediatric equipment and just about anything else needed to sustain a prolonged field operation.

Among the immobilization equipment carried are long and short backboards, collars, head immobilizers, KEDs and a supply of splints. Wheeled stretchers, stair chairs and folding and scoop stretchers are used to transfer patients. Airway equipment includes bag valve masks, a supply of airways, various sized oxygen cylinders, oxygen regulators, suction equipment, nebulizers and a supply of Proventil.

Advanced life support equipment includes a supply of various drugs, IV equipment, syringes, EKG equipment and telemetry equipment. There is also a supply of sterile water, saline solution and sterile burn sheets. Miscellaneous equipment includes stethoscopes, pocket masks, technician's kit, disposable gloves, isolation kits, cold packs, blankets, blood pressure equipment and triage tags.

The MERVs are located strategically around the city to provide for a rapid response to any area. MERV 1 is quartered in Bellevue Hospital on East 26th Street. The Bronx Municipal Hospital-Jacobi Hospital is home to MERV 2. Brooklyn's MERV 3 is quartered at EMS Battalion 58 Station at 420 East 83rd Street. MERV 4 is stationed at Queens General Hospital in Hillcrest.

Apparatus assigned to the MERVs are varied. The newest unit, assigned to MERV 1, is a custom-built vehicle on a 1993 International chassis, similar in appearance to a rescue apparatus. MERV 3 is assigned a converted vehicle, built on a stretched Ford delivery van chassis. MERV 2 operates a modified International school bus-type vehicle, while MERV 4 operates a GMC school bus that was converted by the Shops.

When activated, the MERVs are staffed by EMS Command personnel assigned to the stations in which the vehicles are quartered. They usually are activated for special events where many people are expected to be in a confined area. Additionally, they are activated and placed in a standby status upon receipt of a second alarm, transmission of a 10-60, haz-mat incidents, transportation incidents, hostage situations, explosive devices and multiple casualty incidents. The decision to have a MERV respond to the scene of an incident usually is made by an EMS Lieutenant after an on-scene evaluation of conditions.



MERV 1 operates the newest vehicle, a custom-built unit, similar in style to a rescue apparatus.

all photos by Battalion Chief John A. Calderone



A stretched delivery van chassis was modified as the apparatus of MERV 3.



MERV 2 employs a modified International school bus chassis.



The Shops converted this GMC school bus chassis, formerly a personnel carrier, for MERV 4.

About the Author...

Battalion Chief John A. Calderone is a 25-year veteran of the FDNY. Currently, he is assigned to Battalion 22. He holds a degree in Fire Protection from New York City Community College and has written extensively on the subject of fire apparatus. He is a regular contributor to WNYF.

