

Fireman's skills include emergency medicine

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

CHILI — The term "health-care worker" usually brings to mind images of doctors, nurses and other traditional members of the healing professions.

But firefighters in many ways display the same zeal and concern for people's health that health professionals bring to their duties.

Indeed, firefighters — especially those who live in small towns and villages — are often the first to aid victims of auto accidents, heart attacks or other medical crises, according to volunteers at Chili Fire Department Station Number 2 on Union Street.

In Chili, for example, some members of the volunteer fire department can serve as a backup for the town's two ambulance crews, Fire Captain Bob Mattil pointed out.

When both ambulance crews are tied up, the fire department sends out its own team of Emergency Medical Technicians to assist at scenes of medical emergency, Mattil said. Even on the scene of an emergency, however, firefighters always call for the first available ambulance crew, including those in neighboring towns and villages, the volunteers said.

To better assist those crews, Mattil noted that a growing number of Rochester-area firefighters have voluntarily gone beyond their basic medical training to become Emergency Medical Technicians — better known as EMTs.

Richard Welch, a parishioner at St. Christopher's in Chili, recently joined that number. As a volunteer firefighter with the town of Chili, Welch was required to complete between 60 and 70 hours of training in emergency-medical service (EMS) to become a Certified First-Responder. However, he has also taken 120 additional hours of training to become an EMT.

A requirement of all firefighters in



Erik Kunkel/Photo Intern
Captain Bob Mattil (left), Dick Welch (center) and Battalion Chief John Harriff are volunteer firefighters at the Chili Fire Department's Station 2.

Chili since 1989, CFR training teaches firefighters to perform such tasks as cardiopulmonary resuscitation, oxygen administration and advanced first aid.

"It's good that firemen are becoming proficient in EMS procedures," Mattil said. He and Welch noted that police and other officials who respond to accident scenes sometimes have little or no medical training.

"We try to encourage as many guys as are capable to become EMTs," Mattil added, noting that six of the 35 volunteer firefighters at Station 2 have become EMTs.

And the 120 hours of additional training Welch took to become an EMT puts his medical skills several steps above that of the average firefighter, according to Mattil.

"I figure if I could do the EMT training, I could do more as a firefighter," Welch said.

As an EMT, he is better able to assist

ambulance crews, which often arrive a few minutes after firefighters have started preliminary procedures on a victim, Welch said.

Firefighters generally follow the formula "A-B-C-D-E" when they begin helping victims, Welch said. That formula dictates first determining whether the victims' airways are clear, their breathing regular and their circulation normal; then checking if any part of their bodies are disabled; and if the victims' chests should be exposed for resuscitation.

Thanks to his EMT skills, Welch can go a few steps farther than some of his fellow firefighters; he has been trained to set up such devices as intravenous tubes and to help extract victims from car wrecks without worsening injuries they may have suffered.

Welch and four other firefighters recently helped a Gates ambulance crew to bring a diabetic man out of a coma. Mattil said Welch performed well

under pressure, but Welch credited his fellow firefighters and the Gates crew.

"When you think of a team of surgeons working together, I think we work as well as any doctors," he said.

A desire to protect the gift of life motivates Welch to sacrifice 10 to 15 hours a week as a firefighter.

"All we're trying to do is let this person cheat death a little bit," Welch said of the victims he's helped.

He also credited the camaraderie he enjoys with his fellow firefighters.

"In my opinion, there isn't a better group of people on the face of the earth," he said.

A 1983 convert to Roman Catholicism, Welch observed that his faith and his volunteer firefighting both emphasize one primary conviction.

"You do the best you can for your fellow man," he remarked.

Pondering some of the dangers he has faced, Welch added, half-jokingly: "Several times, probably my favorite phrase has been, 'Oh God, I'll be good if you get me out of this!'"

HCR offers home care

ROCHESTER — HCR, a locally owned and operated certified and licensed home health agency, is currently offering a pre-enrollment program for home health care.

HCR's pre-enrollment program provides skilled nursing, therapies and home health aide services on short notice by caregivers. Appropriate for short-term illness, respite care, professional consultation, vacation or any emergency, assistance is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition to home health care, HCR also provides health-care consulting internationally through its Rochester headquarters, and its offices in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, Ga.

Call Fern Elson Cardella at 716/272-1930 for pre-enrollment forms and information.

St. James Mercy Hospital

Proudly serving the healthcare needs of the Southern Tier since 1890.

Now providing inpatient alcoholism treatment and adult day health care.

411 Canisteo St. • Hornell, NY 14843 • 607-324-3900

Some people need to be cared for.
Others need a chance to care.
We bring them together.

We Provide:

- 24 hour service
- Companions
- Respite Services
- Nurses and Home Health Aides
- All Employees Insured and Bonded
- State Licensed
- Insurance Benefit Assistance

We Employ:

- Nurses
- Home Health Aides
- Personal Care Aides
- Housekeepers
- Companions

CAREGIVERS

Care with us.
475-1500

We Can Help!

- * NY State Certified Alcohol & Drug Treatment Programs
- * NY State Certified Mental Health Clinic
- * Eldercare/Aging Services-Financial Management, Legal Services & Enriched Housing

Individual, family and group therapy for children and adults.



A United Way Agency

(716) 232-1840/TDD 232-1237

Family Service
OF ROCHESTER, inc.



Gloria Nichols D.D.S.

is

Welcoming New Patients

Family Dentistry

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Participant
Evening & Saturday Appointments Available

1795 Penfield Rd., Penfield, NY 14526
586-5442