

- ACADIAN AMBULANCE ESTABLISHES OWN MOBILE COMMAND UNIT
- ACADIAN AMBULANCE PREPARES FOR TROPICAL STORM EDOUARD WITH NEW UNIT
- MOBILE COMMAND UNIT ENSURES COMMUNICATIONS DURING HURRICANE OR OTHER NATURAL DISASTER
- ACADIAN'S COMMAND UNIT WILL ASSIST IN COORDINATING RESOURCES TO DEVASTATED AREAS

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ACADIAN AMBULANCE DEPLOYS "HALO-1"

Acadian Ambulance's response in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 is both well-known and documented. When there was virtually no communications in the devastated region, Acadian found a way to direct their own local operations through a Mobile Emergency Command Unit borrowed from the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Department. Since that time, Acadian has been working on establishing their own mobile operations and recently deployed "Halo-1."

According to Acadian's Chairman and CEO Richard Zuschlag, "For several years we have investigated the idea of having our own Mobile Command Unit. We saw firsthand that when all lines of communications are down, effective response to a disaster is greatly diminished."

When Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, emergency operations throughout the flooded area were rendered useless. The flooding actually forced the closure of one parish Emergency Operations Center, leaving some first responders with no ability to communicate or command local recovery efforts, or have a way to guide State and Federal support for two days following the storm. It was this lack, or the inability to communicate that drastically affected the rescue operations in the field. Zuschlag says, "That kind of problem has been looked at all across the nation as Emergency Operation Centers and Homeland Security Departments have scrambled to come up with solutions to that kind of paralysis."

Halo-1, Acadian's 1st Mobile Command Unit is now a reality and fully functional. A halo, also known as a halo ring, is a cervical fracture brace used to immobilize cervical fractures and aid in the healing of spinal injuries. Zuschlag explains, "Our Mobile Command Unit was named Halo-1 borrowing from this very definition. Halo-1 will be deployed to assist areas impacted by man-made or natural disasters with the primary intention to 'aid' and to stabilize a 'fractured' region."

The key function of Halo-1 will be to assist in the coordinating of ground and/or Air Med resources when communications are limited and non-existent in a specific geographical area. Those staffing the unit will be a combination of communications and operations personnel. The unit can also be deployed for special events such as Mardi Gras, other large festivals, or athletic events, all for the purpose of coordinating local dedicated resources.

According to Kenny Logan, director of Electronic Technology, technological advances now provide first responders with tools once only available at fixed operation centers. Logan says, "The portability of Halo-1 allows for flexibility and immediate response to devastated areas. Wireless communication technology particularly is becoming a critical component in allocating emergency response resources. Acadian now has that mobile capability, modeled after our own fixed communications center and communication tower infrastructure."

Key to the effectiveness of Halo-1 is that it is all self-sustained, with a 12.5KW on board generator and uninterrupted power supply (UPS) system. With one push of a button, an auto-deploying satellite communications dish connects Halo-1 to Acadian's main dispatch center within minutes

where coordination for ground and air operations can commence. Other features of Halo-1 include:

- 40 foot telescoping communications tower
- 700/800 MHz voice radio
- HAM radio
- *VOIP telephone system (10 stations)
- High power Wireless Access Point
- In Motion cellular gateway
- CAD dual monitor work station
- 26 inch LCD HDTV
- High speed pan, tilt, zoom, color camera with on board digital recorder
- Energo Tactica work station
- Space for supplies and "war room" operations

According to Operations Vice President Jerry Romero, "Operationally, Public Safety agencies rely heavily upon communications and data capturing (mapping) to support a comprehensive and complex emergency management system. Communication and the sharing of data is one of the only ways to truly ensure a well-orchestrated response to disaster incidents."

The Energo Tactica is a Convergent Communications application. According to Logan, "This feature delivers true dynamic interoperability by providing Convergence and Interoperability to users anywhere regardless of network or device. In short, it allows us to tap into other agencies such as law enforcement or fire personnel, or even State and Federal agencies to have across the board inter-agency communications and coordination."

Advocates argue that radio interoperability could lead to a future where no person loses a life or is injured because available information could not be shared.

Logan also states that Halo-1 will be consistently evaluated for improvements and for the use of the latest technology in hopes of adding even more value to Acadian's response to emergencies in times of disaster.

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Cutline:

Gearing up for hurricane season, Acadian Ambulance has established its own mobile command unit, Halo-1. The mobile unit will allow for assisting in the coordinating of ground and/or Air Med resources when communications are limited and non-existent in a specific geographical area. It will also house the temporary operations of Acadian's field medics.