Shallotte Rescue To Open Ocean Isle Beach Substation

BY SUSAN USHER

Establishment of a rescue substation in the Ocean Isle Beach area is expected to cut response time and upgrade overall emergency service in that coastal community—without reducing service to the immediate Shallotte area.

Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad will be moving one of its two ambulances later this month to a site on Beach Road adjacent to Ocean Isle Beach Airport.

The other ambulance will remain at the station at Village Road and Blake Street in downtown Shallotte, assured Lt. Mark Gore, an EMT-Intermediate employed by Brunswick County EMS who volunteers with Shallotte Rescue during his off-duty hours.

Opening of the substation, the first in western Brunswick County, is a joint effort of the rescue squad, the Town of Ocean Isle Beach and the Ocean Isle Beach Property Owners Association (POA).

A $15,000 line item in the town's proposed 1994-95 budget is to expand and renovate the house that serves as Ocean Isle's base during hurricanes and other emergencies to shelter the ambulance as well as house rescue personnel on duty. Mayor Betty Williamson said town workers are cleaning up the site, creating a parking area and loop drive, and installing a security fence.

As soon as the ambulance receives some front-end work, it will be relocated to the new site adjacent to Ocean Isle Beach Airport, Commissioner Ken Proctor reported Tuesday.

The POA, which helped underwrite the cost of establishing the Ocean Isle Beach Volunteer Fire Department's first responder program, decided two years ago it would be good to have an ambulance located nearer the beach, said Stuart Ingram, chairman of the association's public safety committee.

"We thought it would take at least five years to accumulate the money," he said. "We didn't have that kind of money in our budget."

"We brought in (Fire Chief) David Harrell and Lt. Mark Gore (of the rescue squad) and talked about

what it would mean for this whole area," said Proctor. "As we talked we saw the good it was going to do for the fire department, but most of all, it could save one life."

First responder calls account for about 60 percent of all calls to the Ocean Isle Beach Fire Department, which operates firefighting, water rescue and first responder services. "That means we responded to about 140 (first responder) calls last year in our service area," said Chief Harrell.

With its volunteer members dispersed over a wide area and heavy summer traffic slowing turnaround times, Shallotte Rescue was also interested in a permanent base in the Ocean Isle Beach fire district.
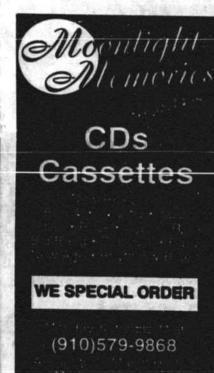
The only equipment its second ambulance lacked was a defibrillator, used in treating cardiac patients to restore normal heart rhythm. If the POA could address that need, the rescue squad agreed to take up the question of a substation with its membership.

The POA didn't quite have the $7,500 and was faced with depleting its budget for the one item, though other projects needed funding as well, such as a new handicapped ramp to the beach.

"But with full confidence we could raise it," recalled Ingram, "we told him to go ahead."

Proctor serves on the town's emergency services committee with Commissioner Kendall Suh and is also a POA director. He and several other individuals began approaching individual donors.

"In one weekend we had either the cash in hand or a commitment for all but a few dollars, and we have it all now," he said. "This is something everybody supports and the entire town board is enthusiastic about."

Some of the same desire for providing fast emergency response prompted establishment four years ago of the first responder group within the Ocean Isle Beach Volunteer Fire Department, as well as temporary berthing some years

ago of a Shallotte Rescue ambulance at the fire station until space was no longer available.

"We're ecstatic," said Harrell. "We can render some assistance; we're trained in basic lifesaving techniques. But these guys are

trained in advanced life support. They can do more and we really need that. To a man, we're excited."

Harrell said the department's 12 certified first responders will still do whatever they can.

"We have four or five people on

the island at all times, so our response time is good. We will continue to respond, to help Shallotte Rescue or Brunswick EMS, whoever responds," he said. "And we have the equipment to get out onto the beach strand."

OCEAN ISLE BEACH is converting this town-owned house near Ocean Isle Beach Airport into a substation for the Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad with the help of volunteers that include Fire Chief David Harrell, Commissioner/POA Director Ken Proctor, and rescue volunteers Ronnie Hayes and Mark Gore.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Crossword Answers

SOLUTION—ACROSS
1. Scram 5. Paper 8. Inner
9. Incur 10. Equip 11. Towed
12. Rile 15. Scheme 17. Exalt
18. Nestle 20. Fade 25. Moist
26. Dirge 27. Erode 28. Niche
29. Event 30. Debar

SOLUTION—DOWN
1. Shiver 2. Racial 3. Mirth
4. Known 5. Predict 6. Plunge
7. Repose 13. Ice 14. Axe 15.
Sly 16. Mad 17. Element 18.
Needle 19. Source 21. Aplomb
22. Endear 23. Cinch 24. Steed