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# First paramedic units serving Santa Cruz and Watsonville

By MARK BERGSTROM  
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SANTA CRUZ — Paramedic ambulance units have begun rolling to medical emergencies in Santa Cruz and Watsonville, starting a program that eventually will bring advanced life-support service to all parts of the county.

Paramedic service previously had been available only in the Aptos Fire District. Aptos pioneered paramedic service in the county, starting with a pilot project in 1978.

Last year the county Board of Supervisors approved a countywide paramedic plan drafted by the county Emergency Medical Care Commission. That plan had been under discussion for five years.

Actually, Santa Cruz Ambulance put paramedics and a nurse on its ambulances

10 years ago, but the county showed no interest in the program and it was soon disbanded. In the meantime, paramedic service was begun throughout the state to the extent that Santa Cruz County wound up among just a handful of counties without a program.

The new paramedic service is operated by Santa Cruz Ambulance in the north county and A-1 Ambulance in the south county. Aptos Fire District continues to operate its own program.

The first north county unit is in service at the Santa Cruz Ambulance station on Hubbard Street, off Ocean Street. That unit primarily serves the city of Santa Cruz plus Davenport, Scotts Valley and Highway 17.

But, since the county's emergency medical service plan is based on moving ambulances from zone to zone to fill in

depending on the number and location of calls for service, the new paramedic unit will operate at times in the mid-county and San Lorenzo Valley zones as well.

In November, paramedic units will be stationed in those zones, too, and by the end of the year a second unit will be in service in Santa Cruz. A-1 Ambulance is to put on a second unit in Watsonville in November.

Santa Cruz Ambulance has started service with seven full-time and two part-time paramedics.

The company has hired four veteran paramedics from outside the area who have been paired with Santa Cruz Ambulance employees Greg Maroney, Joe Tobin and Mike Wilson, who graduated from the Stanford Pre-Hospital Care pro-

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Pete Amos/Sentinel

Paramedics Mike Wilson and Beth Sadler arrive at call Thursday in Santa Cruz.

## Paramedic service begins

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gram in April. The pairing matches the experience of the veteran paramedics with the knowledge of the area by the new Santa Cruz paramedics, who all previously worked here at least four years.

"I think we have ended up with very balanced teams," says Bob Zuckswert, company vice president. Zuckswert, himself, is in the middle of the 1,000-hour paramedic training program at Stanford Hospital. He and six others from Santa Cruz Ambulance will graduate in November and will form the new mid-county, San Lorenzo Valley and Santa Cruz crews.

In a capsule, "patients have the eyes, ears and hands of a physician come right into their own home, plus the expertise of 1,000 hours of special training," says

Zuckswert.

Under the direction by two-way radio of an emergency-room doctor or specially-trained nurse, paramedics can begin definitive, hospital-type care at the scene of an emergency.

The paramedics can, among other actions, begin intravenous fluids, monitor heart rhythms, shock a heart out of potentially fatal rhythms, provide endotracheal intubation for patients who have stopped breathing and administer drugs.

Watsonville Community Hospital serves as the "base" hospital for the south county service. Dominican Hospital, under the direction of pre-hospital care coordinator Diana Jackson, serves as base hospital for the north county. Even so, a patient still can select which hospital he or she wishes

to be transported to. Program planners say they expect no change in the distribution of patients between Dominican and Santa Cruz Community hospitals.

Santa Cruz Community Hospital has been charged with the Sresponsibility for public education and CPR programs and participates fully in writing policy and protocol for the paramedics. Chris Erlandson is that hospital's paramedic program coordinator.

Saladin Sale is paramedic program coordinator at Santa Cruz Ambulance. She completed the Stanford training program two years ago and played a major role in the countywide planning.

"People in Santa Cruz are finally going to be able to take advantage of state-of-the-art emergency care," he says.

### REFERENCE

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