

EMS Profile by Greg P. Henington,
LP, Chief

EMS Profile: Terlingua Fire & EMS

About us: Terlingua Fire & EMS (TFEMS) is a frontier emergency services provider offering both fire and medical services to a 3000-square-mile area located in and around Big Bend National Park. Two separate entities—Terlingua Medics (formed in 1987) and the Terlingua Area Volunteer Fire Department (formed in 1990)—were merged in 2004 as part of a consolidation effort to raise additional funding for the area's emergency services. Although the permanent resident population is about 2000 people, Terlingua and the surrounding area receive approximately 350,000 visitors a year. We average about 200 calls per year and have access to a Level III care facility located 1.5 hours away in Alpine, and more advanced definitive care 3.5 hours away in the Midland-Odessa area.

Personnel and equipment: TFEMS has 20 active members on the roster, including two licensed paramedics, three EMT-Intermediates, three EMT-Basics, four ECAs and four Wilderness Advanced First Aid providers. On the fire side of the organization, we have three Firefighter 3s, two Firefighter 2s and one Firefighter 1. Each summer, TFEMS receives funding from the Texas Forest Service to send volunteer firefighters to Texas A&M's Municipal Fire School.

Our response fleet includes one Frazier ambulance, two back country rescue vehicles, one brush truck, one tender, one engine and a command vehicle. Our ambulance is certified as BLS with MICU capabilities. We use a Zoll Series M twelve lead/vital signs monitor along with a new wave-form capnography device.

We work closely with Big Bend National Park (under a MOU) to provide continuous 9-1-1 coverage to the area. For example, when the BBNP park ambulance is in route to Alpine, TFEMS provides advanced level coverage to



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the national park. We also coordinate together in wildland and structural fire scenarios.

Current activities: Because of our low call volume, continuing education is critically important to the success of TFEMS. For that reason, we conduct two trainings per month (2nd and 4th Mondays) as well as two EMT refresher courses (Intermediate and Basic) annually.

TFEMS recently moved into a new state-of-the-art facility, courtesy of Brewster County, which provides a six-bay apparatus garage, training room, crew kitchen, EMS/fire office, chief's office, bunkrooms and locker/shower facilities. The building also has an

upgraded communication system as well as a new SCBA filling compressor.

Community service projects include fire safety awareness at the elementary school and monthly, free CPR training for all residents of south Brewster County. Medical control allows EMS providers to offer basic wound care as well as blood pressure checks for local citizens.

The first weekend of every November brings the annual "Super Bowl" of chili cook-offs to Terlingua, where 10,000 people gather to cook chili and socialize. Fire and EMS personnel work round the clock for about a week providing emergency services to this crazy, fun-loving bunch of folks!