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Ontario County emergency medical workers answer NYC's call for help

The crews were answering a call from the state Department of Health to assist New York City emergency crews as the city digs itself out of the nearly 2 feet of snow.



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Zoom Mike Maslanik/Messenger Post
From left, Justin Osbourn, Ken Adami and Bernie McGory, members of the Honeoye-Richmond Ambulance Squad, prepare to drive to New York City Tuesday night.

By Mike Maslanik, staff writer
Updated Dec. 30, 2010 @ 6:05 pm

Hopewell, N.Y.

A convoy of six ambulances carrying 17 emergency medical technicians and paramedics left the Ontario County Public Safety facility Tuesday night, Dec. 28, bound for snowed-in New York City.

The crews, which were expected to arrive in the city this morning, were answering a call from the state Department of Health to assist New York City emergency crews as the city digs itself out of the nearly 2 feet of snow that pounded the Big Apple earlier this week.

"It's always exciting when you go on a deployment," said Ken Adami, an EMT with the Honeoye-Richmond Ambulance squad. "It's guaranteed to be a (mess) when we go down there, but I think we'll do some good."

Equipment and personnel from Canandaigua Ambulance, Victor-Farmington Ambulance, Phelps Ambulance, Naples Ambulance, Shortsville Citizen's Hose Company responded to the call.

The crews left at about 8 p.m. after a briefing by Jeff Harloff, director of the Ontario County Office of Emergency Management about what to expect in the snowbound city.

"Obviously, you have to take this seriously, especially patient care, but also have fun," Harloff said. "The experience of going to New York City and helping out is phenomenal. You'll be talking about this for years to come."

The near-record snowfall, with high winds and blizzard conditions, grounded most forms of public transportation to a halt and overwhelmed emergency responders.



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After driving all night to get to the Big Apple, the local crews will meet up with other volunteers at the Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx and receive further instructions for their single, 12-hour shift, said Harloff.

Ambulance crews remaining in this area, he said, will handle local emergency calls through mutual aid. And all the companies involved in the deployment have more than one ambulance at their disposal.

Harloff said officials with the Department of Health called his office Tuesday morning to see how many crews could be made available. In the afternoon, the officials called again and requested the assistance.

The crews will be under the direction of the New York Fire Department and will cover routine calls, like transports and responding to crashes and house calls, he said.

The deployment is an all-volunteer effort, Harloff said. None of the EMTs will be paid for their time in New York City. Many of them took time off from their day jobs for the deployment. Some, like Laurie Henderson, a fifth-grade teacher at Canandaigua Elementary School, already had some time off for the holidays.

"I can't wait to tell my kids when I get back to school," Henderson, a volunteer with Naples Ambulance said.

Area EMTs and firefighters have gone on deployment outside of the county before, Harloff said, most notably for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the ice storms of 1998. As evidenced by those deployments, he said local emergency responders always seem eager to help whenever they can.

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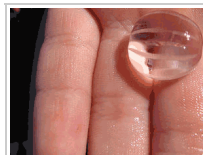
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