

WELCOME TO CVAC!

Thank you for deciding to volunteer for CVAC. We are very happy to have your help on our team. We hope you, like those of us who have trained before you, will find it both challenging and rewarding to help people in the community in emergency situations.

At the start of your training process with CVAC, you will be assigned a Buddy by the Hospitality Committee who will help you in several ways. He or she will try to answer any questions you have about riding and about the Corps. They will walk you through the rig and help you understand where equipment is and what it is used for. They can introduce you to other Corps members. They will also give you contact information so that you can ask them for help or information as needed.

Further orientation information is available on our website: www.ChappaquaAmbulance.org.

In this New Members packet you will find the following:

1. Introductory information about how to qualify to “ride on the rig”, that is to serve on the ambulance in one of the several roles of the Corps
2. Standard Rig Test Checklist
3. An explanation of how a shift works for you and the Corps
4. Inventory listing contents of the ambulance so you can become familiar with supplies and their locations on the rig.

**ROLES ON THE RIG, or
“WHO AM I, AND WHAT AM I DOING HERE?”**

Corps members fill three roles or jobs on ambulance calls. CVAC members may perform different roles from call to call, depending on their training. The three jobs are:

**AIDER
DRIVER
EMT**

(We also have Youth Corps members on many calls.)

Most volunteers start out as **Aiders**, who assist on calls, before they decide whether they will go on to train as Drivers or EMTs. All new members are closely supervised by more experienced members when they start to ride. Aiders provide critical support on calls, working closely with the EMT and the Driver, bringing medical supplies, assisting with patient handling, but not performing direct patient care.

Drivers must complete the ambulance driving course, offered within the Corps, and perform specific tasks on a call including, of course, driving the rig.

EMTs must attend an official EMT course, approximately 150 hours of class time, followed by about 24 hours of observation time with a professional ambulance corps (such as Empress in Yonkers). They must pass the course, then pass both the State Practical and the State Written exam. After that they become certified as EMTs by the State of New York and can ride as EMTs, shadowing a more experienced CVAC EMT for their first several calls. The cost of an EMT class is reimbursed by the Corps when successfully completed.

A TICKET TO RIDE

The process of riding with the ambulance is obviously a privilege and a responsibility. To qualify to ride, you need to achieve three milestones (see below). As you move toward these milestones, you will have a chance to get to know other members of the Corps, ask questions, and learn more about ambulance calls, and what it's like to ride. We hope you enjoy the process.

THREE MILESTONES BEFORE YOU CAN RIDE

In order to ride in any of these capacities, you must achieve three milestones. Note -- these can be done in any order, but they must all be completed before you can ride.

- 1. PASS THE RIG TEST**
- 2. CPR FOR THE PROFESSIONAL RESCUER (CERTIFICATION)**
- 3. BE VOTED IN AS A MEMBER**

1. PASS THE RIG TEST

In order to ride, you must know where things are on the ambulance, what is in all those bags of gear, and how to use it. How are you going to do this? You must become familiar with the ambulance, and the only way to do this is to spend some time exploring the ambulance.

Every Tuesday night is House Duty, or inventory/gear check at CVAC headquarters. The bulk of this task is done by the Youth Corps (supervised by adults) who divide up the pages of a 16-page packet listing all the gear on the ambulance. You should start coming on Tuesday nights and do the same thing. Watch what the Youth are doing. Take a page of the inventory, and go through it yourself. Think of it as a treasure hunt. See where bandages are stored. Find the AED. Figure out what that big storage cabinet is for. What's in the green bag that's not in the orange bag?

After you start getting comfortable knowing where the gear is stored, you have to start learning how to use it. For this you will need to grab a Youth Corps or adult member, or consult with your Buddy, and ask more questions. Learning how to operate the stretcher/gurney is a key task, for example. Consult the Standard Rig Test Check List in this packet for more ideas of what you should learn.

On most Tuesday nights after House Duty the Youth are provided a training session of various skills. You should sit on these as well as they will introduce you to new skills and procedures.

After some number of Tuesday nights, anywhere from four to twelve is usual, you will feel familiar enough with the ambulance and its gear to ask to take the Rig Test. One of the officers will give you this test. If you pass it, you can continue in your three-phase process of riding.

2. CPR FOR THE PROFESSIONAL RESCUER

This course is offered frequently by the Red Cross in White Plains, and often through Phelps Hospital and through other sources (sometimes in the Corps itself). The Corps will reimburse you if you have to pay for the class. It's an approximately six hour course which is useful to take anyway, where you'll learn the Heimlich maneuver, how to use an AED and other vital skills. When you receive your CPR Card you have completed this phase.

3. BE VOTED IN AS A MEMBER

To be voted in as a member, you must attend one monthly meeting (held on the last Monday of most months -- ask). You will be introduced to the membership at this meeting. Then you must attend the following monthly meeting, where you will be voted on. Remember, monthly meetings start with food, and often end with training, what's not to like!

Once you've completed all three milestones, tell your buddy, who can connect you with the second lieutenant, who will issue you a uniform shirt and jacket, and that important piece of equipment, your pager (see below).

Our building and electronics specialist will assign you your own personal pager code, and provide you with an electronic key to the building. He will also set up an account for you on Rescue Booker, our automated scheduling system.

NOW THAT I'M READY TO RIDE, AM I READY TO RIDE?

Good question! What is the process of riding, anyway? Your Buddy or any Corps members can explain the dynamics in more depth, but you need to know a few basics.

One thing to remember: CVAC is an all-volunteer organization. While we do keep records on everyone's training, we rely on our members to keep up to date with certifications and any updates to procedures and protocols that come along. We also expect members to feel free to ask questions if they are unclear on a procedure of any kind.

WHAT TO WEAR AND WHAT NOT TO WEAR WHEN RIDING

You will need to see the second lieutenant who will issue you a uniform shirt and a jacket in your size. In addition, we ask all members to buy uniform trousers/cargo pants which are available at most uniform stores and on-line at sites like AllHeart.com. These are dark blue pants which have big pockets in which you can comfortably carry a phone and a variety of equipment, and can hold a solid belt which will support your pager. These are reimbursable by the Corps. You will also need sturdy black shoes or boots (think in terms of walking on broken windshield glass).

We wear (at a minimum) on every call protective gloves (referred to as BSI gear -- Body Substance Isolation). These are provided and are stored on the rig.

No shorts, tank tops, flip flops or sandals, ever, on calls -- even when it's really hot. CVAC has often been commended for the professional image our volunteers project in public.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I'M ON CALL?

Two things can happen on a shift, and, note, one of them is nothing. There are often stretches of time where no emergencies happen. That's the way it is with emergencies. As one of our members said, "A call can come at the best time, the worst time, or not at all." Of course we're pleased when everyone in town is healthy!

All members are issued pagers which must be with you, in working order, and turned on during your shifts. If there is an emergency, the pager will vibrate or beep, and you will hear the police calling for Chappaqua Volunteer Ambulance Corps. The nature of the emergency will be described very briefly, the address of the call will be given (remember this), and you will hear the time of the first page. (Times are important and all response times, from time of first page to time of arrival on the scene, to time of arrival at the hospital, are logged by our Corps and by the State for quality control.)

The page is your signal to get to the building quickly (but safely and following all local traffic laws as if you are regular driver).

When your pager goes off, the first thing you want to do, even before you start driving, is to phone into the CVAC call-in system (238-0505). When our building and electronics specialist assigns you a pager number, he will explain this system to you. Basically, you will call an automated phone line, enter your code via your phone key pad, and a "#" to indicate "responding to CVAC HQ." The automated phone line will confirm your identity, and an electronic board right by the ambulance will list you as "responding to the building." This alerts the crew that you are on the way and they should wait for you.

On occasion, members are so slowed down by the traffic we all know and love in downtown Chappaqua, that for the patient's safety, the crew must leave without them. If it happens to you, it will not be the first time! The crew will phone the police, who will page you, and alert you from the pager to "respond to the scene." This is why you remembered the address in the first place. Go directly to the location of the call and join the crew there.

During your shift, you need to always be in a location no more than five minutes drive from CVAC HQ. For some members, this means (bridge traffic and school bus activity to be accounted for) you can listen from home and get to the building if needed. Other members must adjust their activities for the shift so that they are close to HQ. Some people hang out at the building and get

paperwork done or catch up on videos. Others arrange their schedule to do local errands when on call. It is possible to spend time at the Library or to hang out at Starbucks and so on, as long as you and your car are ready to get to the ambulance building on short notice.

You will be provided a flashing green light to put on top of your car or on your dashboard. This green light is only for use in responding to ambulance calls. The green light informs other drivers that you are going to an ambulance call. *It does not entitle you to drive in any way differently from other drivers.* You must obey speed limits and all traffic laws and can be given a ticket if you do not. If you are lucky, other drivers will pull to the side as you come by, if they notice the light. You can tap your horn politely if you think it will help you get through a tricky spot of traffic but again, you cannot run lights or in any way drive differently than anyone else.

When you get to the building, park your car and get onto the rig. The process of going to a call is something you will learn by doing. Remember that every member on this Corps had a first call, and understands that you are new and learning. They expect you to ask questions (appropriately within an emergency situation) and will do their best to explain things to you as they happen. You are not expected to do everything perfectly until you have had some experience, but you must always ask questions if you need clarification .

After most calls participants will “debrief”, that is, discuss what went well on the call and what might have been done differently. For example, if you had to move the stretcher over a patch of ice, how might the ice have been better prepared in the first place, and so on.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY A SHIFT?

We demarcate twelve-hour shifts on a seven am to seven pm, seven pm to seven am clock. Not everyone can do a twelve hour continuous shift and we work with everyone’s schedule. Six hours is preferred; if you can take 7-1 or 1-7 it makes time keeping easier. But again, especially if you have kids in school we will work with the time you have available. Shifts are signed up for in advance on a system called Rescue Booker, which will be explained to you, and you will be assigned a member account.

Every member is expected to do the equivalent of one twelve-hour shift per week plus one twelve-hour weekend shift per month.

WHAT ELSE IS EXPECTED OF CVAC MEMBERS?

You will learn more about CVAC as you start to volunteer, attend meetings and talk to other members. Here are two more basic responsibilities all members need to remember.

1. CONFIDENTIALITY

Everything you see and hear on ambulance calls is privileged information, in two senses. It is a privilege to be able to help people in a very vulnerable situation, often in their homes and bedrooms. It is also privileged in the sense that it may not be shared or discussed, beyond the immediate requirements of the call and the debriefing afterwards. This is both an ethical and a legal restriction. Calls might be discussed in a general way for training purposes.

Although it is occasionally tempting and only natural to want to discuss what you have seen or experienced with family and friends, we expect all members to be discrete about all calls. The names of people we assist do not leave the ambulance corps, nor their addresses, nor the details of their illnesses. Obviously in a small community the need for privacy is even greater. You may encounter friends or friends' children in less than optimal circumstances, and the details have to stay within the context of the call. People will likely be upset and their behavior may not be characteristic or optimal when they need emergency care. Their medical condition may well be a very private issue. We do not gossip or share information about our calls outside the Corps.

Also, Corps business, budgets, and other discussions are generally speaking private matters that should remain within the Corps.

2. ONGOING TRAINING AND CERTIFICATIONS

Training is offered frequently: at monthly meetings, at special sessions, on-line, some Tuesday nights after house duties, through other local agencies, and in other ways. We often hold or participate in mock disaster scenarios and drills with other agencies or other towns. These can be greatly educational as well as interesting and you are encouraged to participate.

You'll be reminded when your CPR or EMT certifications are about to expire, and you need to be alert about keeping them current.