

## Crews 'love new building' at Delta Ambulance

By John Hale  
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*(Photo by: John Hale)* The new Delta Ambulance building at 10 Cony Rd. in Augusta has bays for five ambulances and one wheelchair van. The portion of the building with offices and crew quarters is not pictured here.

Augusta — Delta Ambulance has a brand new home at 10 Cony Rd., next to the intersection with Route 105, and at 9,000 square feet, it's four times larger than the company's previous building.

The \$1.2 million building was completed between June and December of last year by Sheridan Corp., using local subcontractors, and Delta Ambulance crews moved in Jan. 23.

Bill McKenna, Delta's director of community relations, enjoys pointing out some of the new building's attributes. The garage has bays to accommodate five ambulances and a wheelchair van inside.

Large, flexible tubes capture diesel fumes when ambulances are backing in and pulling out. McKenna said the old building, which was located on the same site, could handle three ambulances indoors and the whole building was coated with dirty diesel dust.

Another preventive measure against the diesel fumes is that the part of the building where rescue crews work and relax between calls is raised a couple of feet above the garage floor. McKenna said that's because diesel fumes tend to sink rather than rise. The work-and-living quarters part of the building also is kept isolated and at a slightly higher air pressure to keep out fumes.

McKenna said four Delta ambulances are on duty during the day and two are on call at night. A crew of two people, both certified as EMTs or paramedics, are assigned to each ambulance.

While the new building was under construction, Delta Ambulance moved down Cony Road to Shostak Construction and rented out that company's ground floor. But the ambulances had to be kept outdoors. "It was a little difficult with the snows the early part of last winter, but we managed," said McKenna.

Delta Ambulance was formed in 1972 by three hospitals in Waterville and is a nonprofit corporation. It opened a branch in Augusta in 1991 after buying the Capital Ambulance Co. McKenna joined the company in 1984 as a basic EMT and a dispatcher, working up to a paramedic before moving into his current position.

The company is still based in Waterville, with five ambulances located in the basement of Seton Hospital. But that hospital is due to be closed with the construction of a new regional hospital in north Augusta, so Delta will have to find a new location in Waterville, McKenna said.

The company has more than 120 employees -- 52 of whom are full-time while the rest are part-time -- who may shift between Waterville and Augusta. Dispatching is done from Waterville, McKenna said.

"We are the 911 service for 18 communities," he said. "From Augusta, we respond to Jefferson, Whitefield, China, South China, Vassalboro, Palermo and sometimes Albion.

"We have a contract with Togus. It's all transfer calls. If a veteran is in the hospital in Greenville, we go to Greenville and bring him to Togus. If someone needs to go to Boston from Togus, we go to Boston. Generally, we go to Boston three or four times a week, just from Togus."

In 2009, Delta Ambulance handled approximately 17,000 calls out of Waterville and Augusta. "We also do transfer services to and from the hospital, to and from the cancer center and to and from nursing homes," McKenna said. "There are some days when the guys don't get to rest at all and some days when they can catnap."

Both men and women rescue workers have separate rooms in the new building where they can sleep, if necessary, while working long shifts. McKenna said about 30 percent of the company's employees are women.

They also have rooms with comfortable furniture for watching TV and eating meals. There is an exercise room with two multi-use exercise machines that hasn't yet been made operational. "We're about to launch a wellness program for the company," McKenna said.

In January, Delta Ambulance was recognized by the Maine Employers Mutual Insurance Co. for having gone 2,100 days without an employee injury. That same month, it won the President's Award given out by the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce. And, in May 2008, the company won the Patriotic Employer Award for supporting employees who were called up for active military duty.

All the lights in the new building are motion-sensitive, meaning they turn on when somebody is in a room and go out when someone leaves. There's no need to flip a light switch. And a room with computers allows workers to keep up with patient records.

Another feature of the new building is its large conference room for staff meetings and training. "We used to have to go rent a room or set up tables in the garage," McKenna said. "We don't have to do that anymore."

In the summer, he said, the company will set up a picnic table under a canopy in back of the building where employees can eat lunch in a private place.

Best of all, McKenna said he can tell that Delta's employees "love the new building" because "they clean it every day."

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