

## **EMS satellite stations: Sapillo**

Gila Regional Medical Center offers emergency medical services to the community and ambulances can be seen traveling the streets of Silver City and down the highway to other venues.

Did you know that not only Silver City-based units answer calls for help?

GRMC has three satellite EMS groups that travel the roadways in the less-populated areas around Cliff, Sapillo and the Mimbres Valley.

May is Emergency Medical Services Awareness Month. And these three will be featured in a series about what these volunteer groups do.

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### **Sapillo EMS**

The Sapillo Creek Emergency Medical Services unit is a satellite of the Gila Regional Medical Center EMS.

In 2008, the Sapillo Creek Volunteer Fire Department celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was founded in 1983, and within a couple of years, the volunteer EMS unit was formed.

Most of the original members were First Responders. Of the four volunteers that provide services now, two are intermediate-level emergency medical technicians, and two are basic-level EMTs. Another volunteer is on inactive status.

The group serves an area from the Continental Divide on N.M. highway 35 to the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument on the north to Sheep Corral Road on the south.

“We can go months without a call,” according to coordinator, Renee Despres, who joined the unit in 1996. “We have about 40 calls a year, so we’re a low-volume service, but sometimes our services have been critical.”

The group’s ambulance from GRMC, which is also stocked and maintained by the hospital, is housed at the Sapillo Creek Volunteer Fire Department at Lake Roberts.

Two EMTs live near the dwellings, in Gila Hot Springs, one EMT lives near the junction of N.M. highways 15 and 35, and the other near the Continental Divide.

Because the EMTs all have full-time jobs, whoever is available responds to a call. If no one is available, the unit has an agreement with the Mimbres volunteer EMS.

“We also always have the option of someone from Gila Regional,” Despres said.

She is working toward being certified as a paramedic and hopes to offer needed services to the community, such as basic screening tests. As a paramedic, she will also be able to provide more medical services than she can as an EMT.

Calls for help within the area go through Central Dispatch to the unit's five volunteer dispatchers who page the EMTs and let them know whether fire or EMS units are required at the scene.

"For fire, we usually mobilize on standby," Despres said. "Each of us has an individual jump kit with oxygen and first aid items. We also have intermediate-level life-support available in the Gila Hot Springs area."

As training coordinator, Despres offers once-a-month trainings, as well as a video loan program. Every two years, members are sent to EMT conferences.

"We're out there as a service to the community," Despres said. "I encourage people to get involved."

A first anniversary celebration, reception and open house at the 10,000 square foot EMS facility at Gila Regional will be held at 9 a.m. on May 14, 2010. The building includes a state-of-the-art training center where volunteers can train and perfect their skills.