

IPSS Medical Rescue

Kwazulu-Natal based IPSS Medical Rescue is a 24-hour advanced life support (ALS) medical rescue and ambulance service, which was formed by Dylan Meyrick and Paul Herbst.

IPSS Medical Rescue has enjoyed year-on-year growth since inception. Meyrick explained, "We have developed our business model and service on community and regional needs and we continue to grow with those cities and communities. Our fleet has grown significantly to meet operational demand and we continue to expand into areas where there is a need for our services."

History

"The service came into existence after having identified the need for emergency medical services primarily for our industrial clients on the security side within the region. The north coast experienced rapid growth, to become a thriving region; existing infrastructure and capacity in respect of emergency medical service (EMS) was not necessarily where it needed to be," said Meyrick.

Since it started operating in 2013, additional divisions within IPSS Medical Rescue have been formed with respect to training and events. The training centre is the most recent addition to the company and is accredited to present first aid courses. Herbst elaborated on the events division, "We have developed in-house capacity to offer event organisers additional solutions in respect of event risk management and legal compliance services."

There have been a number of adaptations to accommodate for growth of business. The additional base, located at Mediclinic Victoria Hospital, opened in early 2015. "The Ballito-base moved into larger premises to make provision for continued growth and for the addition of training and administrative facilities. The call centre also moved to larger premises, which is largely driven by technology," said Herbst. In addition, all bases are currently undergoing necessary additions or changes, in order to comply with the recently released EMS regulations. ▶



The IPSS Medical Rescue operational team and vehicle fleet

► Operations

The management system of IPSS Medical Rescue makes provision for two area-operations managers who are further assisted by shift leaders, "We operate on an open-door management policy and encourage the active contributions of staff and crews," said Meyrick.

IPSS Medical Rescue renders 24-hour ALS medical rescue and ambulance services to communities and has operational bases in and/or units in the following areas, Tongaat, Ballito, Stanger, Mandeni and Ladysmith. The road operations division focuses primarily on the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal and extends coastwise from Umhloti North to Mtunzini and inland to Eshowe, Kranskop



Paul Herbst, co-owner of IPSS Medical Rescue

and Ndwedwe, whilst the site-based solutions extend into other parts of the country. Rapid response and technical rescue units operate in Ladysmith, primarily supporting industrial clients within the region.

"Our risk management division is able to develop risk and site-based onsite solutions to industrial clients and remote projects. Solutions range from onsite medical resources and personnel, to turn-key emergency response system development and management," said Herbst.

The rescue units often assist other services and organisations with rescue capacity and resources. IPSS Medical Rescue has an excellent working relationship with neighbouring service providers, KwaZulu-Natal Emergency Medical Rescue Services (EMRS), local authorities and the South African Police Service (SAPS) Search and Rescue (SAR) unit.

Meyrick said, "There is also the continuous integration of technology into existing overall services and solutions, including the development of emergency response related mobile applications and software." Furthermore, "an intensive care unit (ICU) ambulance has been added to the existing fleet, in order to facilitate high-acuity ICU transfers," he added.

On any given shift IPSS Medical Rescue has two medical directors on-call, two operational managers, one incident coordinator, two rescue units, four rapid

response units, ten intermediate life support (ILS) ambulances and one ALS ambulance on duty. The operational team currently respond to about 500 calls a month including motor vehicle accidents (MVAs), industrial injuries, medical emergencies and drownings and inter-hospital transfers. The technology-enabled call centre ensures that all resources are managed efficiently and effectively.

Staff complement

The team of operational personnel at IPSS Medical Rescue consists of 40 basic life support (BLS), 14 ILS and ALS medics as well as two medical doctors. The call centre has a total of six operators and there are four occupational risk consultants, five training facilitators and four respective managers.

"We understand the need to invest in developing future and current skills and talent pools," said Herbst. Therefore, IPSS Medical Rescue identifies enthusiastic and promising individuals and once opportunities open up, they are placed into a stringent volunteer development and mentoring programme. "Unique to IPSS Medical Rescue is that all volunteers are employed on a three month contract and paid a stipend to ensure that they are covered by Workers' Compensation Administration (WCA) in the case of an accident," explained Herbst.

Vehicle fleet

The company's fleet consists of five rapid response units, ten ILS ambulances, one ALS ambulance, one aquatic rescue unit and one rapid deployment disaster unit. There are also two technical rescue and support units available with respects to vehicle-, trench- and high-angle rescue, including incident command and scene protection and management units.

Incidents

IPSS Medical Rescue has attended to several challenging incidents in recent months. Most notably is the incident that saw a fully laden taxi carrying 18 people, which broke through a barrier and fell onto railway tracks below. A train hit the taxi before anybody had the chance to escape, resulting in 15 deaths. It was a long and challenging incident that left an imprint on many of the personnel who attended.

In another incident, IPSS Medical Rescue's paramedics and rescue technicians responded to where a man who had been stabbed and thrown off a cliff in a rural location and had been clinging onto a rock ledge for almost 24 hours. In conjunction with SAPS SAR, a successful rescue with a positive outcome was executed.

Challenges

Herbst explained the regional-related challenges faced by their service, "Notwithstanding everyday challenges to be expected with running an operation such as ours, we are fortunate enough to identify with opportunities more than we do challenges. On a regional level there have been certain challenges in the past, relating to volunteer emergency medical services (VEMS) and



*Siyabonga Gumede, IPSS Medical
Rescue ambulance assistant*

more specifically their ability to ensure consistency in respect of services. It had become a frequent occurrence whereby under and unqualified personnel without adequate resources, were responding to emergency calls from the community. This was of concern to us and other professional organisations for obvious reasons."

Future developments

IPSS Medical Rescue's future expansion plans include the opening of additional bases and early in 2016 it ►



IPSS Medical Rescue's operational team

- ▶ is expected to have a medical response helicopter available as part of its fleet.

Meyrick said, "It will be made available from the helipad in Ballito to service calls in KwaZulu Natal. The plan is to make one of the paramedic seats in the aircraft available to qualified ALS and ambulance emergency assistant (AEA) staff from any service wanting to gain experience as a flight medic. The aircraft will not be branded with our name and logo in hopes that other services will put aside the petty competition and make use of the aircraft in the interest of the patient."

Additionally, in respect of site-based services and solutions, growth into international regions are anticipated within the first half of 2016. Future plans for operational growth are linked to operational demand and case load, therefore IPSS Medical Service proactively monitors the origin of calls so as to identify emerging trends and identify areas in need of operational expansion.

"We are unique in our approach, operational capacity and operational coverage," remarked Meyrick. 🔥



IPSS Medical Rescue's rescue team performing cliff rescue



Danelle Hefers, IPSS Medical Rescue ambulance assistant