



# The Early History of Morris Minute Men Emergency Medical Services

The idea of a volunteer first aid squad for the Morristown area began in 1938 within a group of 150 men working with the Morris County Sheriff's office preparing for World War II. When the Civilian Defense Corps developed in cooperation with Naval Intelligence this group disbanded, but a nucleus of Red Cross-trained corpsmen saw the need for a local first aid squad. In September 1941, the Morris Minute Men were founded, and officially organized early in 1942.

The Minute Men name was adopted to reflect the goal of volunteers responding quickly to community need, in the tradition of the colonial militia and in keeping with the Morris area's colonial history. The famous Concord statue of a minuteman was adopted as the squad's logo later. The first Morris Minute Men responded in an old delivery truck from Frank's Fish Market in Morristown.

After the war, some of the enthusiasm for community response to emergencies waned, but a far-sighted group of men recognized the continued need and worked to revive lagging interest. Community support re-energized the squad and

\$3,840 was raised to purchase a 1947 Ford ambulance, retiring the fish wagon. This cadre of dedicated citizens set the vision for the Morris Minute Men in this post-war era: volunteers who served without cost to their communities. This is still the guiding principle of the Morris Minute Men.

The next stage in the squad's growth was the early 1950s. Morris Minute Men was officially incorporated in February 1952, a strict code of ethics was adopted and an improved dispatching system initiated under President Johnson Stewart. A \$7,000 Superior Cadillac ambulance equipped with the newest radio equipment was purchased in 1953 - the first to carry the famous Minute Men blue.



The original Morris Minute Men ambulance parked on the grounds of Morristown Hospital. Crew members carried their own first aid kits.



By the 1950s the squad's fleet included a 1947 Ford ambulance, a 1953 Cadillac ambulance and a second hand Jeep. The Jeep's four wheel drive capability launched the squad's role in emergency rescue.

## Early History (Continued)

Squad members began wearing a formal uniform of white coveralls and white shirt. A new set of by-laws limited membership to 30 active corpsmen and raised the age limit from 18 to 21.

Increasing calls taxed the one-vehicle and a fund raising campaign raised enough to buy a second ambulance - a 1959 Cadillac. Morris Township invited the squad to house the two ambulances in the township garage on Mill Road. Previously, the rigs had been parked in various places around town. The squad also purchased a second-hand jeep. The four-wheel drive capacity with a front winch made it one of the best equipped emergency vehicles in the area, beginning the Minute Men's continuing role in emergency rescue.

In 1961, the squad responded to 650 calls. Increasing call volume prompted the squad to join the Morris County Police Radio System in 1962 and the 1953 and 1959 Cadillac's were numbered 67 and 68, as part of the county-wide numbering system. Today all Minute Men vehicles retain the traditional 60s nomenclature.

New ambulances replaced the aging fleet throughout the 1960s. A 1961 Pontiac replaced the 1953 Cadillac. In 1964 the squad purchased a Cadillac S&S four-carry ambulance to handle the increasing number of multiple-patient traffic accidents. In 1965, working with the Morris Township Civil Defense, the squad purchased a new International four-wheel drive ambulance, expanding their emergency rescue capacity. Members also built a squad room at the Mill Road site. The organization was divided into operations and administration and a captain was added to supervise the duty lieutenants who supervised their crews.



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## Early History (Continued)

In 1970, the squad answered 1,274 calls. The shared garage on Mill Road became severely over-crowded and a permanent headquarters a primary need. This problem was solved when the Morris Township Department of Public Works moved to new facilities on Jane Way and the Township first leased and then sold the Mill Road site to the Minute Men. On June 12, 1971, ground breaking ceremonies were held for the squad's new headquarters under the able direction of then President Peter J. O'Hagan, Jr. The building was dedicated on November 13, 1972.



The Morris Minute Men's new squad headquarters on Mill Road in Morris Township was dedicated on November 13, 1972.

During the 1970s, the Minute Men continued to grow in calls, members and level of professionalism. By 1970, most Minute Men were certified in the "five-point certification." The squad was on the leading edge of the development of the Emergency Medical Technician training through then President Peter O'Hagan, who was working closely with the medical teams at Morristown Memorial Hospital in developing the EMT program. Today, all Minute Men ambulances are crewed by at least two state-certified EMTs.



Early training included CPR and basic life support. Today, in the post-911 era, members are also trained in hazardous materials and mass casualty incidents.

For decades, the Minute Men limited their membership to 30 men. That was no longer possible with the burgeoning call volume of the 1980s and 1990s. As the 20th century waned, the squad's traditional membership model was no longer feasible. First women, and then younger members were welcomed. The squad was evolving to meet both the changing needs and character of the Morris area and membership was a priority. From 30 men, to more than 75 men, women and teenagers, the Minute Men grew to serve their communities.

This squad's continued growth in calls paralleled the population growth of Morris Plains and Morris Township, and the resultant increase in traffic volume on the three state highways and the two new interstates flowing through our service area. The number of ambulances continued to grow and today the Minute Men fleet consists of six vehicles numbered from 64 through 69. Also, the unique Minute Men Blue, first used in 1951, represents the continuity of our vision and service to our communities.

## Early History (Continued)

On September 11, 2001 the world changed. At 11:00 am the Morris Minute Men dispatched two ambulances and first responder vehicles into New York City with 10 crew members to provide support for the rescue workers and triage support at the World Trade Center site. The Minute Men also responded to several 911 calls in New York City. The crew left New York on September 12 and returned with one ambulance and four crew members on September 14 to the Chelsea Pier area to again provide triage support to the ongoing rescue effort.

In 2008, the Minute Men name was changed from First Aid Squad to Emergency Medical Service to reflect the expanded scope of services. Today the Minute Men work closely with the Morris County Emergency Management program in serving many of their major institutions, from the Fire and Police Academy to the County Jail, but also in training with and helping to staff the Morris County OEM's assets.

Today the Minute Men staff at least one full crew, and usually two, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is not that unusual to have two and three Minute Men ambulances answering calls at the same time. Since its inception membership in the Morris Minute Men has increased from 30 men to more than 90 men, women and teens.



2010



2012



2013



2015