

Northwest Fire/Rescue District (AZ) (2011 CFSI Award Recipient) (Career)

With ten stations to serve explosive growth, the Northwest Fire/Rescue District (NWFD) serves a 140 square mile area surrounding Tucson and the adjacent metro region of Pima County, AZ. Always striving to enhance the delivery of service for the community, NWFD undertook a needs-assessment survey in conjunction with the University of Arizona to establish benchmarks and institute continuous quality improvements. NWFD realizes that community-based medicine will be the future of the department and the community.

To address the need for consistent and uniform training for all urban, suburban and rural stations, NWFD has turned to high-fidelity technologies. Using an iStan manikin from Medical Educational Technologies, the department has provided innovative and qualitative training to all stations. The department has also realized the benefits of telemedicine for distance-learning. Based on the department's needs, an organic relationship developed with the Arizona Simulation Technology and Education Center at the University of Arizona's College of Medicine and the Arizona Telemedicine Network that has bridged the challenges for distance learning for both pre-hospital and hospital personnel. The natural evolution of pre-hospital EMS training has taken steps to standardize patient care and provide regional training with multiple geographically diverse locations in real time.

Utilizing the extensive capabilities of advanced technologies, like telemedicine and simulation, as tools for pre-hospital EMS training in multiple geographically diverse locations in real time enables EMS personnel to perform high-risk invasive medical procedures without actual patient contact or risk of exposure to communicable diseases. In December 2010, a mass-casualty trauma exercise coupled with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) refresher training for battalion chiefs was conducted to produce stressors over and above "the norm" and allow multiple units on scene to problem-solve and work through any complications.

Less than a month later, on January 8, 2011 during a public meeting with Representative Gabrielle Giffords, several lives were lost in a massive shooting. The Northwest Fire/Rescue District responded and later credited the mass casualty simulation drill as the exact training that prepared NWFD for the real incident.

NWFD will continue to embrace high fidelity medical training both locally and regionally in order to maintain a standard that continues to meet the growing needs of the community.