

# The EMS Experience

Saluting those with 20 years or more in EMS

Michael T. Legoudes, EMT-P



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**What was your first day on the job in EMS?**

August 1, 1973

**Which services have you worked for over the years?**

I began at City of West University Place Fire Department, where I worked full time until I retired as a captain in 1998. I was also a part-time duty crew with Alief Volunteer Fire Department, and I was operations director and staff paramedic with the Kingwood Area EMS Association from 1977 through 1997. Since July of 1998 I have been with City of Humble Fire Department as a full-time assistant fire chief/EMS operations.

**Why did you get into EMS?**

I actually went to work for the fire department after a brief period as a volunteer firefighter. EMS was part of that fire department, and I developed a love for the EMS part of the job. EMS was especially rewarding and was rapidly evolving into a specialty that was challenging and offered limitless training and opportunity. I was able to see positive results every day in patient care and outcomes.

**How has the field changed since you've been in it?**

I could almost write a book on how EMS has changed since my first day. As I was beginning my career in the fire service, the standard for certification was changing from advanced first aid to a minimum requirement of EMT-Basic for firefighters. Our department was fortunate that we could train personnel in the same EMT program as the city of Houston. That program was being conducted by the Houston Health Department. After becoming an EMT, you could advance to paramedic level training (at that time it was called EMT-Advanced). There wasn't an Intermediate level. During those early years, there was an on-going rivalry between the Houston Health Department and the State of Texas Health Department as to whether or

not the Houston Health Department's written and skills testing should be acceptable for state certification. As a result, candidates completing training, took the written and skills tests for both departments and carried two certification cards. Certification was good for two years, and prior to expiration, you were required to take a refresher course and go through both testing processes again in order to maintain certification. It wasn't until 1983 that I was issued my first four-year certification. Sometime during this process, the EMT-Advanced level was changed to paramedic. Not only has the knowledge- and skills-based content changed with an increased number of training hours and clinical requirements, the technology of diagnostic and skills equipment has advanced the ability of paramedics to perform the frontline medicine that they are delivering today.

**Is there a particular moment or call that stands out?**

There are numerous calls or moments that stand out in the many years I have been involved in EMS. They range from the first childbirth in the field to cardiac arrest saves or the worst trauma imaginable. Any time you make a positive difference, it can be memorable. My first shift out of paramedic school certainly stands out. In that 24-hour shift, we responded to three cardiac arrests and were successful in resuscitating two of them. A couple of years later I was involved in the successful rescue of a 14-year-old female who was unconscious and not breathing as the result of a structure fire in which her parents were fatalities of the fire. After



*Legoudes takes the driver's seat in 1974, just a year or so after beginning his 35+ year career.*

bringing her out of the structure, I was also involved in her successful resuscitation prior to the arrival of the ambulance that transported her to the hospital. One pediatric patient stands out because of the number of cardiac arrests that he suffered. In a period of about four or five years, this child suffered four cardiac arrests. I was the lead paramedic on all four cases. We successfully resuscitated him on the first three occasions but the fourth time wasn't meant to be. That was probably the saddest day of my career, as I had come to know the family very well. The parents were extremely involved in our community EMS system, serving as members on our EMS Board of Directors, and they were instrumental in the on-going development and progression of the service to the community.

**What has been your favorite part of your career in EMS?**

This is another tough question. I have done everything from being one of the first paramedics in my department going all the way up through and including being the EMS administrator for two of the services that I have worked for. I have always strived to do things the right way and made it a point to teach and demonstrate that to others. I particularly enjoyed the many years that I served as an EMS coordinator, instructor and examiner teaching and developing numerous people who went on to careers as EMS volunteers, as paid professionals in the fire service or EMS, as nurses or as physicians. I would like to believe that I played a role in their successes. Many of these same people and the organizations that I have been

fortunate to be a part of have certainly inspired my development over the years. I wouldn't be where I am today without the confidence that others have had in me. So, I guess that you could say that my favorite part of my career is "All of it." That's why I'm still in it after all of these years, and I don't plan on leaving it anytime soon.

*Have you or someone you know been in EMS for 20 years or more? Texas EMS Magazine wants to hear from you! We'd like to publish these profiles in the magazine and then upload them to a spot on our website that will be dedicated to a first-person history of EMS. For information, write Kelly Harrell at [kelly.harrell@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:kelly.harrell@dshs.state.tx.us). And don't forget—we need photos, too!*