



United Hatzalah of Israel

Highlights of the week in Israel

8 June 2009

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This week we look at a particularly tragic incident and our efforts to help our volunteers to deal with the aftereffects of these incidents. I was quite heartened by the strong showing at our recent convention. A difficult SAR situation ended differently than we wished but we intend to take the lessons learned from the incident to help others.

Thank you and have a great week.

Sincerely,

Eli Beer

Chief coordinator

Convention of Unity

It was an evening to remember. It was an evening of unity and an evening of strength. Over a thousand United Hatzalah medics from across Israel gathered in Petach Tikvah to hear words of support and encouragement from leading rabbinic and public figures.

The recurring theme was that the people of Israel are deeply appreciative of United Hatzalah.

I was pleased to receive warm words of encouragement from many of Israel's leading rabbis, including Rabbi Aryeh Leib Steinman.

The need for a 'special forces' emergency response teams like United Hatzalah was reiterated. Many people spoke about the benefit that would come from United Hatzalah volunteers responding to emergency calls from all ambulance services.

The value of United Hatzalah's autonomy provides it with the ability to work with everyone.

The main benefit of United Hatzalah's expanded range





of services will of course be the better and faster emergency care. In addition the costs to the patient will go down as United Hatzalah medics can radio to any of the command centers to assure the patient receives the optimal level of care in the most expedient fashion.

Our dear dedicated volunteers were of course treated well with a sumptuous buffet and small gift as token of the appreciation we all have for them.

Brothers together



Some of the calls stick with our volunteers long after the bits of broken plastic and used bandages are cleared off the street. This past week had a few of those. In Ramle, United Hatzalah medic Shmuel Sofer (brother of United Hatzalah Ambucycle division coordinator Zeev Sofer) was moments away from a reported serious traffic accident. As he raced on scene he came across an crushed, overturned vehicle that had been slammed into by a vehicle coming from the opposite direction.

A quick triage on the scene identified one person in the overturned vehicle who could not be helped. In the second vehicle there were 3 people, one of whom was mortally wounded. As passersby began to assist the injured

the extent of tragedy began to be known. The fatality and the mortally wounded were brothers - and the mother had just come on scene. Before people were able to direct her away from the tragedy she collapsed, having seen what no mother should ever see. Medical attention was quickly directed to her as well.

I chatted with medic Shmuel Sofer after this particularly difficult incident and he commented that he has a 'decompression' process where he discusses difficult events with a trusted family member who has a medical background as well. Emotional well-being is another facet of the concerns we have for all of our volunteers.

Dr. Elijor Vas a renowned psychiatrist in Israel advises United Hatzalah medics to put on their emotional armor before they get into stressful situations as "it is more effective to prevent the injury than to bandage it afterwards". Effective emotional armor in high stress events includes minimizing preexisting stressors (lack of sleep,





interpersonal conflicts) as well as deep breathing and mental preparation before entering a stressful situation. After the event, it is important for medics and in fact all people who experience traumatic events to realize that seeking help is a healthy and normal way to grapple with these events.

Water Rescue/Recovery



It was a pleasant afternoon for relaxing by the Kineret when a group of 3 friends decided to take their inflatable rafts out one last time. Unnoticed by the group, the evening currents were growing in strength. They turned for shore and paddled as fast as they could when they got to the shore they realized that one member of their group didn't make the shoreline.

After short period of frantic searching and shouting for their friend the group alerted the police. With over 160 sq km of surface area and over 50 km of shoreline the single patrol boat had its work cut out. As the night wore on without sign of the missing person word went out for volunteers to help in the search.

United Hatzalah volunteers from the Tiberias area were naturally among the first to lend a hand. Those who had access to private boats activated them, others hopped aboard boats already on scene, while other joined the shoreline march in search of the missing person. 3 long days later the police boat recovered a body later identified as the missing person.

The United Hatzalah Tiberias district has been pushing for rescue boat in their area. This case only highlights the need. The intrepid volunteers located a boat that met the technical specifications needed for the task. In addition to retrofitting the boat with appropriate GPS/sonar/radar gear. It will require high power searchlights and warning lights, along a motorized inflatable dinghy for shallow water access.



**Thank you to all who have given us the opportunity to continue our work.
We hope you will continue to support us in the future.**

United Hatzalah is the largest emergency rescue volunteer organization in Israel which, working hand in hand with MDA has the endorsement of the leading Rabbis in Israel. **United Hatzalah** has branches in almost every city in Israel from the Golan Heights in the north to Eilat in the south.