

EMS staff get protection Written by Rudo Mungoshi 08 April 2011

Paramedics in the field will be protected from attack with a new communication device that uses GPS. They are also being trained in self-defence.

A NEW sophisticated emergency communication system designed to protect paramedics from violence has been rolled out to all the City's emergency management services (EMS) vehicles.

EMS committed to improving safety of employees, says Dr Audrey Gule In addition, the EMS has engaged a martial arts organisation to train staff in self-defence techniques.

"The EMS is committed to improving the welfare and safety of its employees," said Dr Audrey Gule, the head of the unit.

The new system was launched at Hodgson Street Fire Station in Roodepoort on Thursday, 7 April. It comes after two female paramedics were attacked in Durban Deep, western Johannesburg, last year while attending to a toddler with burn wounds.

Mix Telematics has provided the components, which include a vehicle mobility tracking system and panic buttons for paramedics. The company is involved in designing, developing and selling fleet management technology and vehicle tracking services to the vehicle market.

Gule said the new communication system would help to ensure the safety of paramedics and improve their service to the public.

In addition, more than 400 EMS members, most of them women, were trained for two months by a team of volunteer self-defence specialists. "We will be continuing with the programme in due course. A major fleet management company has pledged financial resources to help us achieve this objective," said Gule.

Self-defence

Esther Manzini, a self-defence graduate Esther Manzini, a paramedic at Ivory Park Fire Station, described the martial arts programme as helpful.

"The course has given me confidence and the knowledge of how to protect myself," said Manzini. "Previously, I thought that if I got attacked by a huge man, I would have to use all my strength to fight but the course has taught various tactics, especially how to attack the pressure points such as the throat, groin and the eyes."

During the launch of the communication system, Mix Telematics demonstrated how quickly armed security responded when the panic buttons were triggered.

The new system was a big step forward for the safety of paramedics, said Gert Pretorius, Mix Telematics' managing director.

“The crews will be able to call for emergency assistance with the press of a single button ... This will greatly improve the safety of paramedics and through the Global Positioning System the location of crew members will be identified quickly should they need urgent assistance.”

The training of the EMS staff on the use of the communication system is expected to be completed on 21 April.