San Diego Service Authority For Freeway Emergencies

Turn your cell phone into a Mobile Call Box
Who is this Bald Man?

Edward Steven “Eddie” Castoria, M.A. J.D.
President/CEO, TeleTran Tek Services, Inc.

a/k/a T-Cubed

Executive Director
San Diego Motorist Aid Authority
A Public-Private Cooperative Arrangement
Assisted by my beautiful and talented Great Niece Emilia James Carstens

Born March 2008, 2 lb., 6 oz.

3 months premature

BUT JUST LOOK AT HER NOW !!!
Note the resemblance
Today You Will Learn About:

How does a fixed call box system work?

The ABC’s of MCB

Motorist Aid of the Future ???

Where do we go from here?
What is a SAFE?

Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies

Each SAFE in California is a public agency operated under a Board of Directors made up of local elected officials from within that County.

SAFE is a regional agency created under California law by agreement of the County and its cities, and is separate from them.

The SAFE serves as the primary Motorist Aid agency within the County.

SAFE is funded by a $1 vehicle registration fee collected by DMV each year on all vehicles in the County.
What Does SAFE Do?

- Each SAFE owns and operates a system of call boxes installed along Interstate and State highways within the SAFE’s County. San Diego County has 1,400 call boxes.

- The call boxes are solar-powered cellular phones encased in weatherproof yellow enclosures placed on galvanized steel poles attached to a slip base augur.
Stranded motorists push a button and are automatically connected to either a CHP Comm Center or, in most larger SAFEs, to a private Call Box Answer Center. The CBAC then connects the caller to whatever source of assistance is then available, such as:

- AAA, manufacturer’s help line or other motorist assistance program
- Home, work or friends who can come out to assist
- Freeway Service Patrol (free tow or fuel during peak times)
- Rotational tow through CHP (motorist pays for tow)
- CHP for dispatch of public safety assistance
Urban vs. Rural
Then and Now

Late 1980’s/Early 1990’s
- Calls answered by CHP Communications Center as 3rd priority behind 911; average wait time for live operator was 120 seconds
- Analog cellular transceiver
- San Diego SAFE got over 170,000 call box calls per year
- Call boxes only way for motorists to call for help

2008
- Calls answered by private Call Box Answer Center as 1st priority under contract terms
- GSM digital tranceiver
- Call volume dropped to about 25,000 calls per year
- Most motorists have cell phones, and tend to call 911 for help
Emilia, what should we do in the face of declining call volumes?
Duh!! Use cell phones!!!
How Mobile Call Box Works

Cell Phone

Cell Tower - Carrier Switch

511 = (619) xxx-xxxx
Switch Translation

Help's Here!!

Call Box Answer Center

Caller Selects Mobile Call Box
Benefits of Mobile Call Box

Modernizes the provision of motorist aid services using the same technology -- the cellular phone – that caused the reduction in traditional call box calls;

Reduces the number of cellular 9-1-1 calls that CHP must answer, freeing CHP operators to handle real 9-1-1 and homeland security calls;

Reduces the average waiting time before a motorist aid call is answered to less than 20 seconds;

Capitalizes on the existing relationships among SAFE, CHP and the Call Box Answer Center;
Uses the same procedures developed cooperatively among SAFE, CHP and the Call Box Answer Center;

Capitalizes on the training and experience of Call Box Answer Center operators in handling motorist aid calls and recognizing calls requiring transfer to CHP;

Provides enhanced access call box services for persons with mobility disabilities, who could obtain assistance without leaving the vehicle;

For other jurisdictions who already have 511 implemented, drastically reduces the cost to provide Motorist Aid:

- Cost to install digital TTY call box system of 1,400 call boxes would be over $3 million today;
- Annual operating costs for system (maintenance, cellular service) would be nearly $600,000;
- But implementing MCB through existing 511 system would cost perhaps $100,000, because there are no maintenance or cellular costs. Ongoing costs are mostly for call answering services.
Issues and Challenges

• Locating caller
  – While fixed call box locations are known, Answer Center must rely on caller to identify location. Answer Center uses series of questions to help caller identify location;
  – CHP has agreed that, if Answer Center cannot identify caller’s location, operator may tell caller to hang up and dial 911, even if not an emergency. E911 systems will then identify location by latitude and longitude.
  – Rural cellular signal (but wait!)

• Getting the word out
  – TV and radio
  – Highway signs
  – Public information presentations at large employers
OK, Great Bald One, you’ve convinced me that Mobile Call Box is a valuable Motorist Aid tool. What’s next?

Motorist Aid of the Future