



Chaplain Bill Lotz
Director of Emergency Service Chaplains

"Emergency Guidance"

By Nathan Isaacs

Herald staff writer

Photo compliments of

Tri-City Herald Paul T. Erickson

Fire Chaplain Bill Lotz stops mid-sentence to listen to an emergency call coming over the speakers in the downtown Kennewick fire station and it's then that you realize this guy is always on the job - and loves it.

Lotz and about two dozen [volunteer ministers](#) work with police and fire departments from Kennewick to Sunnyside to help, emotionally and spiritually, the secondary victims of traumatic events. The chaplains provide support to those who watch helplessly in a daze as their homes burn or as a loved one receives emergency medical treatment.

The [Emergency Chaplaincy Program](#), which Lotz initiated in 1987 and is now under the sponsorship of the Tri-Cities Chaplaincy, also helps emergency workers deal with the stress of the job so they don't bring it home at shift's end.

For that work and for helping create a national training manual for other emergency chaplains, Lotz was recently named the Fire Chaplain of the Year by the National Federation of Fire Chaplains. It's been hard, though, to give him proper recognition.

The Chaplaincy planned a small celebration for Chaplain Lotz, however, the guy works 24/7 and was responding to the needs of a family in crisis at the time of the event," said Dave Riddle, executive director of the Tri-Cities Chaplaincy. "He's great," said Kennewick Fire Chief Bob Kirk. "He's my hero." "Bill is one of the best, absolutely," said Richland Fire Chief Grant Baynes. Lotz's success comes from the marriage of his faith in God -- with his passion for firefighting. He once was a volunteer firefighter for Benton County Fire District 1. He explains the program as being a resource for both the emergency workers and the community.

The Chaplaincy web site explains that emergency chaplains respond as needed to crises scenes, minister spiritually and emotionally to victims and their families, provide communication between emergency workers and victims, follow an incident as it transitions from home to hospital or elsewhere, connect victims to other community support such as the Red Cross or other clergy, and maintain personal and professional relationships with emergency workers.

Through his work and in completing his doctoral thesis in ministry, Lotz created the template for what has become a nationally recognized training manual for other fire chaplains in the country. "I can't tell you how good this program is to the community." Kirk said.