

Emergency Ambulance Service

by Fred Macdonald

Peace of Mind

It is the middle of the night. Your spouse has called out that he or she is having severe pain. You turn on the light and see a person in distress, unable to walk. Whom do you call for help?

A call to 911 in Atenas will connect you with an emergency operator, probably located in Alajuela. If you are lucky, the operator will speak some English, but you have to give directions to your house without referencing any street names or numbers. An ambulance may get there eventually, but when?

Fortunately we now have an alternative emergency medical care system in Atenas. A private company called *Linea Vital de Costa Rica* is located on the main road on the right going toward San Jose, about a quarter mile east of the coope. They have two modern ambulances, fully equipped with defibrulators, oxygen, and medicines. Certified paramedics are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When you sign up for their service, the paramedics will make notes on your medical condition, and then they will come to your house so that they will know exactly where to come in an emergency. They will give you a membership number, and in an emergency all you have to do is call their phone and give your number. An ambulance will respond promptly.

Depending on the situation the paramedics may treat you at home, or they may take you to the nearest hospital (Alajuela), or they may take you to CIMA.

One of the paramedics speaks fairly good English, but the others do not, and you do not know who will be on duty. However the company is affiliated with an English-speaking doctor who lives in the Jaco area, and comes to Atenas on a regular basis. This doctor may be reached by phone at any time to communicate with you.

Subscribing to this service also entitles you to free emergency care in your home. If you should need to have your condition monitored, or to have tests done, such as blood pressure or analysis, trained professionals will come to your home as often as needed.



Lineal Vital Headquarters

We live in a wonderful country surrounded by friendly people who are anxious to help us. Normally we get along fine. But in an emergency it would not be as easy as calling 911 in our home countries.

For a household with two adults this service costs about \$40 per month if you pay 6 months in advance. This fee also covers any temporary guests you may have in your house. You may never need it. But if you are like me, the peace of mind is worth every penny.

To sign up, call 446-7440 and make an appointment to visit their facility and register. Depending on who answers and your Spanish skills, you may want to ask them to have someone who speaks English call you back. Here is how I think you might say that: "Por favor, digale a alguien quien habla ingles que llamarme a numero 446-xxxx." Now you see why I don't want to be calling 911 and speaking Spanish.