



(L. to R.) Mada guide Mr. Binyamin Forgas; Rabbi Asher Levi, Rav of Kehillas Adas Yeshurun; Harav Shlomo Haraz (speaking); Harav Shmuel Dovid Gross; Harav Michael Hacohen Schwartz and Harav Avraham Mordechai Berkovitz.

Expensive Medical Equipment Distributed to Volunteers of Hatzolah Ashdod

Respected Rabbanim and local personalities attended a special event held in Ashdod to mark the successful conclusion of professional first-aid and CPR courses for volunteers of Hatzolah Ashdod.

Expensive medical equipment and MIRS internal communication systems were distributed to the volunteers.

Hatzolah Ashdod was created eight months ago under the encouragement and direction of all the Rebbes and Rabbanim of Ashdod and with the blessings of *Gedolei Yisrael*.

Ashdod today is a large city that numbers about 200,000 inhabitants, *ken yirbu*, and includes some of the largest concentrations of chareidim in Israel, in neighborhoods that are undergoing impressive development. However, the city has no local hospital of its own, and the driving time to the nearest hospitals — Barzilai in Ashkelon and Kaplan in Rechovot — is about 40 minutes. When there are traffic jams, which are frequent, the ride can take even longer.

This means that a Magen David Adom ambulance can be stuck in a round-trip hospital ride for an hour or more.

Although Magen Dovid Adom does as much as it can, the distance to the nearest hospitals impacts negatively on what is called the “gold hour,” the first critical time period after a medical emergency when appropriate emergency medical intervention can save a life.

Therefore, all the Rebbes and Rabbanim of Ashdod, from all the different *kehillos* and denominations, united around the common cause of organizing the *avreichim* to take part in this important service. The two Rabbanim who took the initiative upon themselves, with the encouragement and blessings of the *Gedolei Yisrael*, were Harav Avraham Mordechai Berkovitz and Harav Michael Hacohen Schwartz, who worked

around the clock for this crucial mitzva of *hatzolahs nefashos*.

In the month of Shevat this year, all the Rebbes and Rabbanim of Ashdod signed a proclamation in which they expressed their support for the initiative and said, “People frequently need immediate medical attention in circumstances that border on *pikuach nefesh*, and every minute is precious. Today, it is difficult to obtain the necessary aid in time.”

When the Hatzolah Ashdod organization was founded eight months ago, 120 *avreichim* signed up and two professional Mada courses were opened that were taught by a professional Mada guide, Mr. Binyamin Forgas from Beit Chilkiya. At the conclusion of the courses, about 50 *avreichim* from all strata of *Yahadus chareidis* in Ashdod received CPR and first-aid certificates from Mada. In addition, many experienced people who hold professional first-aid certificates and have long served on-call for Mada have joined the Hatzolah Ashdod staff as volunteers.

At the ceremony held this week, the Hatzolah Ashdod volunteers were furnished with expensive life-saving medical equipment as well as MIRS devices for internal communication and for paging the volunteers. This internal system is important because the chareidi communities in Ashdod are located at great distances from one another, and it is vital that the volunteers not all rush to one emergency call in one neighborhood while neglecting another call in a different neighborhood.

Thus, the scores of *avreichim* who were supplied with expensive medical equipment are well prepared for all calls to save *nefashos beYisrael*, with the prayer that they will only be on standby and never actually needed, in the hopes that Hashem will eradicate disease and misfortune from His nation.