Dave Lyons of Holland College in Canada, left; Joseph Dupuy, Acadian Ambulance; Mike Nolan, Holland College; and Crystal Chedear and Mel Guidry, Acadian Ambulance, prepare a victim of a car wreck in Lafayette for transport to an area hospital. Lyons and Nolan are training with Acadian Ambulance.

Canadians study Acadian Ambulance operations

BY ANGELA SIMONETTE

LAFAYETTE — They’re Canadians, oh! Daily every paramedic who worked through the Acadian Ambulance broke from this world on the streets and in the hospitals and tried to make some Canadian feel welcome during their visit to the company’s Lafayette headquarters.

Eight students and one instructor at the Holland College Paramedic III program in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, spent a week at Acadian Ambulance to study the company’s operations and structure.

The students, who are graduating this year, are studying Acadian Ambulance as a ‘faith-based’ company.

Student Jodie Walker first visited Acadian several years ago as part of a national team investigating American ambulance operations with visits to companies in Louisiana, Florida, and Virginia.

The team, Walker explained, was trying to reinvigorate Nova Scotia’s emergency care system. "Acadian caught my eye because its concentration on rural delivery was something the others did not have," Walker said of the trip.

"They’re really good. They’re really good," Walker said. "I always thought that this was something that was a really good concept, and it’s something that we need to implement in our own system."

The province has been trying to move from a more traditional system, with fixed routes to respond to the injured or ill as a sideline, to a professional system, with fixed routes from the scene to the hospital.

A government-owned corporation bought the Nova Scotia ambulance service, and now runs a for-profit system that is moving towards private and contract work.

"When we started back in 1991, it was mostly around responding to people in the hospital," said Acadian’s Troy Guidry. "Now we’re also in preparedness and training with professionalism. That’s where they were three years ago."

When Walker started working in emergency more than 10 years ago, paramedics weren’t even available in Nova Scotia, he said.

"That has changed exponentially," said Acadian instructor Mike Nolan.

Academia paramedics in Canada are certified at the national level, as are paramedics in the United States, Nolan explains.

There are some differences though. Canada’s health care is universal and focuses on preventative care, and there isn’t much criminal or paramedicine to deal with, Nolan said.

During their visit to Acadian, the students and Nolan worked regular shifts on ambulances in Air Med, in the company’s administrative department and in dispatch.

"We’re really impressed with the company," Walker said. "And everyone from the crew is very, very, very welcoming. They’ve allowed us to make ourselves at home."

Nolan said he was struck by the efficiency and professionalism of the company. "I think that Louisiana should be proud to have access to a company like Acadian," he said. "It’s a large role playing so much goodwill and making the community feel safe."

The students were very aware of the cultural links between Louisiana and their country.

"The ambulances are a very important part of the community. They are very proud of their heritage," Walker said.

"Non-Canadians are very proud to have Acadians as neighbors," Nolan said. The cultural links have made the trip even more interesting.

"Not only have we been impressed with Acadian Ambulance, but we have been impressed with the community and their ability to maintain such good will with such a large industry," Nolan said.

Although the time got to celebrate America’s Independence Day on Monosc, they missed out on their own Canada Day last week.

But the media at Acadian didn’t let that slip by.

They were ready with "Happy Canada Day" signs and even dug up a recording of "Oh Canada." "I had a phonograph turn," said student Jon "Canadian" Guidry. "They made us feel very welcome, from the top management to the people standing on the street. They’ve made us feel right at home."