



Mercedes-Benz Museum
Press Information
3 February 2023

Without blue flashing lights and siren: Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance of 1937

- Special body based on the Mercedes-Benz luxury saloon
- From the fleet of musical instrument manufacturer Hohner in Trossingen
- Space for two patients, and a Red Cross light instead of a visual/acoustic warning system

Stuttgart. “Close-up” – the name of this series by the Mercedes-Benz Museum says it all. Each instalment tells a surprising, exciting or behind-the-scenes story. To do this, it focuses on details of a vehicle, an exhibit or an architectural/design feature. In the spotlight this time: the Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance of 1937.

No. 2/2023: The Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance.

Without blue flashing lights and siren: With its inconspicuous grey paintwork, the Mercedes-Benz ambulance built in 1937 differs significantly from today’s standard. This is demonstrated by its immediate neighbours in the Mercedes-Benz Museum: a few vehicles further on, in the Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers, is an emergency ambulance dating from 2001 that has a box body based on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter – with blue lights, siren and the familiar livery in bright colours. The Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance at the Museum, on the other hand, does not yet have the visual and acoustic warning functions that have been standard since the middle of the 20th century. In technical jargon, these are referred to as blue “rotating beacons” and a “two-tone horn”. Instead, a simple Red Cross sign lights up above the windscreen during operations.

More than “rear-view mirror rescue”: Musical instrument manufacturer Hohner in the German town of Trossingen purchased the ambulance based on the comfortable Mercedes-Benz 320 (W 142), presented in 1937 and featuring a **57 kW (78 hp)** 3.2-litre six-cylinder engine, for its company medical service. Open the two side-hinged rear doors and you’ll find stretchers for two patients on the left-hand side, one above the other. The lower stretcher can be loaded and unloaded quickly and gently, as it rests on a rail-guided roller-mounted bogie. The bench seat on the right is presumably for an attendant – ideally medically trained. There is also a folding seat. All in all, the vehicle offers a better standard than the so-called “rear-view mirror rescue”: until the nationwide introduction of the modern ambulance service, the paramedic doubled as the driver and kept an eye on the patient in the rear-view mirror while driving.

Emergency medical care and the motor vehicle: 86 years ago, in the event of an accident or other medical emergency, the focus was not on first aid at the scene of the incident, but on fast and

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Board of Management: Marcus Breitschwerdt (Chairman), Bettina Haussmann, Andreas Theel

* Further information on the official fuel consumption and the official, specific CO₂ emissions of new passenger cars can be found in the publication entitled “Leitfaden über den Kraftstoffverbrauch, die CO₂-Emissionen und den Stromverbrauch neuer Personenkraftwagen” [“Guide on the fuel economy, CO₂ emissions and power consumption of all new passenger car models”], available free of charge from all sales outlets and from Deutsche Automobil Treuhand GmbH at www.dat.de.

reliable transport to a hospital or doctor's office. But at least the ambulance already provided options for emergency treatment en route. What measures were carried out at the time? The exhibit at the Mercedes-Benz Museum gives us clues: there is a holder for a cylindrical object – perhaps a gas cylinder for respiration. There is a kidney dish in a compartment in the partition facing the driver.

Initiative for safety: Today's emergency service with its now familiar structures and vehicles was systematically built up in Germany from the 1970s onwards. However, various preceding organisations have existed since the 19th century. These include public, voluntary and private ambulance service providers, as well as companies with their own ambulance service. Since the 1890s, these have used vehicles with various types of drive system as ambulances. The combustion engine soon established itself as the best drive system.

The high-and-long principle: The body of this 1937 ambulance was built by Lueg in Bochum according to a patented system. It makes maximum use of height and length, and is designed specifically for transporting patients. The front end as far as the windscreen corresponds to the original Mercedes-Benz 320. Behind the driver's cab is the compartment for patients and attendants. It is heated. Access is provided by the double rear door and a side door behind the co-driver. This configuration proved its worth: later in the brand's history, comparable ambulances of the "high-long" type were often built on the basis of chassis in the tradition of the Mercedes-Benz E-Class with a long wheelbase.

Wide range of variants: Today, there is a wide variety of Mercedes-Benz base vehicles providing for emergency rescue needs. Estate models, SUVs and vans are used by emergency doctors, while vans and van chassis with special bodies are used as ambulances. Trucks and buses bearing the Mercedes star form the basis for large-capacity ambulances and intensive care vehicles. Their key mission has remained the same: to provide emergency help – quickly and reliably.

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The Mercedes-Benz Museum is open daily from Tuesday to Sunday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The ticket desk always closes at 5 p.m.

Registration, reservations and latest information: Monday to Saturday from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. by phone on +49 (0) 711 17-30 000, by email to classic@mercedes-benz.com or online at

www.mercedes-benz.com/museum

Press photos and further press information: group-media.mercedes-benz.com

Further research and multimedia material: mercedes-benz-archive.com/museum



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Captions

23C0027_001

Mercedes-Benz Museum. Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers. Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance (W 142) of 1937. Exterior view from the front right.

23C0027_002

Mercedes-Benz Museum. Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers. Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance (W 142) of 1937. Open rear doors, view into the patient area.

23C0027_003

Mercedes-Benz Museum. Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers. Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance (W 142) of 1937. View into the patient area with space for stretchers (left) and bench seat for attendants.

23C0027_004

Mercedes-Benz Museum. Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers. Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance (W 142) of 1937. View through the sliding window between the driver's cab and patient area.

23C0027_005

Mercedes-Benz Museum. Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers. Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance (W 142) of 1937. Semaphore direction indicator.

23C0027_006

Mercedes-Benz Museum. Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers. Mercedes-Benz 320 ambulance (W 142) of 1937. Illuminated Red Cross sign on the roof above the windscreen.

23C0027_007

Mercedes-Benz Nürburg 460 ambulance (W 08) for the Mannheim professional fire brigade. Photo from the early 1930s. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: 14296)

23C0027_008

Mercedes-Benz 170 V ambulance (W 136). Pre-delivery photo from 1946. These ambulances were among the first vehicles that Mercedes-Benz started to produce again after the end of the Second World War, from May 1946. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: 45182)

23C0027_009

Mercedes-Benz 170 S-V and 170 S-D ambulances (W 136). Bodywork by Lueg in Bochum. Cover page of the 1954 brochure. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: 1998DIG6)

23C0027_010

Mercedes-Benz 180 or 180 D ambulance (W 120) with four-door partial body. Bodywork by Miesen, photo from 1955. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: 66861)

23C0027_011

Mercedes-Benz 280 E ambulance of the 123 series. "High-and-long" principle, mounted on a chassis for special-purpose bodies. Moving vehicle photo from 1977. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: 1998DIG327)

23C0027_012

Mercedes-Benz Museum. Collection Room 3: The Gallery of Helpers. Mercedes-Benz Sprinter emergency ambulance of 2001.

23C0027_013

Mercedes-Benz 320 Pullman Saloon (W 142). Exterior view from the front left. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: 26244)

23C0027_014

Mercedes-Benz 320 Pullman Saloon (W 142). Exterior view from the front left, from an elevated position. (Photo index number in the Mercedes-Benz Classic Archives: 28938)