

Snowmobiling CERT Team Enhances Emergency Services in North Dakota

The residents of Burleigh County, North Dakota are no strangers to the dangers of extreme winter weather and heavy snowfalls. When emergency service vehicles are unable to respond to emergencies, the members of the Roughrider Snowmobile Association CERT are able to assist. The nearly 30 snowmobiling CERT volunteers can traverse terrain often rendered impassable to emergency service vehicles.



Members of the Roughrider Snowmobile Association CERT respond to highway emergency.

Given the county's expansive 1,668 square miles, which includes the state's capital, Bismarck, particularly bad winter storms can leave residents feeling isolated and out of touch. Enter the Roughriders. These hardy CERT volunteers stand ready to conduct a variety of tasks on their motorized sleds. For example, after a snow storm, volunteers search for stranded vehicles to ensure no one requires medical attention before marking the abandoned vehicle to signal that it is empty and ready for a tow. Because of the unique needs of

the snowmobile riders, the program modified the standard CERT kit to include a snowmobile backpack complete with winter supplies, including warmers, emergency blankets, and a collapsible snow shovel.

During a CERT activation in the Spring of 2013, volunteers provided rides to critical hospital personnel to ensure they made it to work safely. They also transported first responders to the scene of an emergency. The team completed Incident Command System training, and they are notified of potential storms to provide increased readiness for possible activation.

Mary Senger, Burleigh County Emergency Manager, encourages CERT program managers and emergency management professionals to collaborate with organizations already serving the community. The Roughrider team meets frequently and volunteers regularly take supplemental CPR, first aid, and other essential trainings, some of which Senger's office helped facilitate. "They have the desire, the passion, and the snowmobiles," said Senger, praising the volunteers. "It's a great fit for our community."

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