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<https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/aspr-tracie-healthcare-system-preparedness-considerations-speaker-series-summary.pdf>



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HEALTHCARE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS  
INFORMATION GATEWAY

# Healthcare System Preparedness Considerations Speaker Series

March 2022

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# Search and Rescue in the Big Horn Basin

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An integrated partner in community emergency response

**Access speaker bios here:**

<https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/speaker-series---big-horn-basin---speaker-bios.pdf>

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Disclosure: We have no relevant relationship of financial/ material support to disclose.

Photos: Unless otherwise marked, photos are taken by the presenter or part of the group's common photo collection



# Objectives

- Illustrate the role of Search and Rescue in rural emergency preparedness and response
- Demonstrate how search and rescue can achieve effective interagency collaboration in response to emergencies
- Provide a model for resource sharing in a rural, low resource setting
- Show the role of search and rescue in rural healthcare



# Coverage area

The Big Horn Basin Healthcare Coalition is made up four counties:

- Park
- Big Horn
- Hot Springs
- Washakie

Together they cover **14,375** square miles.





# Search and Rescue mission

- Overlaps with all public service agencies and operations
- Versatile skill set
- Collaboration between agencies, counties and states
- Covers expansive geography
- Under the sheriff's office, SAR response jurisdiction covers every inch of Wyoming
- Partner to every emergency response agency

## ▼ Search and Rescue roles

- Searches and rescues in the backcountry and cities
- Body and evidence recoveries, any time the coroner cannot reach by road
- Water and ice rescue/recovery/event safety standby
- High angle rescue/recovery
- Public education on backcountry safety
- Supporting commerce through rescue of hunters, hikers, treasure seekers, boaters, pilots, ice climbers and snowmobilers.
- Support for oil field workers at remote sites
- Assistance with forest fire evacuations and standby rescue for fire crews





# Unique hazards

- Mountain and desert environments
- Animals
- Extreme weather with deep snow
- Dam
- River, lakes and irrigation canals
- Long distances to specialty medical care





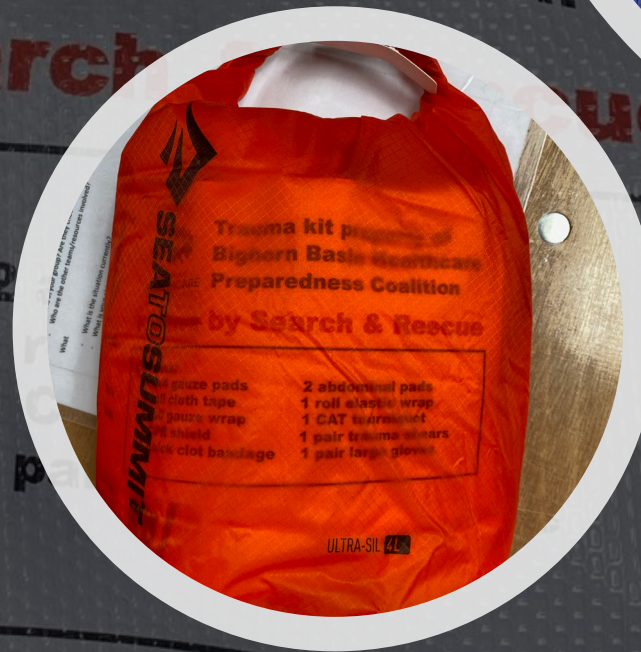
# Search and Rescue and Healthcare

- SAR participates in hospital and county wide multi-casualty drills
- Members were available for screening and setup of secondary treatment facilities in the initial covid response
- SAR has been called upon to move patients, medications and blood products when winter storms have shut down transportation
- Part of emergency evacuation plans in the event of a dam failure or catastrophic weather event.
- Integrated with EMS and multiple air medical companies



# Healthcare Coalition Partnership

- 2 SAR representatives on BHBHCC
- Grants available to SAR through HCC
- HCC provided light, waterproof personal trauma kits for every SAR volunteer in the region
- The HCC and Park Co SAR co-sponsored a Critical Incident Stress Management Certification course







# Partnership with Wilderness Emergency Medical Services

- Cody Regional Health provides an Advanced Life Support Team to the region
- The team is independently equipped with medical and survival supplies and trained in wilderness response
- Ready to imbed with any SAR team on water, in avalanche conditions and overnight backcountry responses





A SAR volunteer/physician demonstrates airway maneuvers on a wilderness paramedic



Firefighters, EMS and SAR members respond to a mock county disaster drill at the airport





Patient care anywhere





# Patient Care Any Time

EMS and Park Co SAR join with the local community college EMT class to do winter night operations training (top left).

SAR water team practices ice rescue (top right).



Crews from Big Horn and Park Co SAR and Wilderness EMS bring an injured ice climber out of the backcountry (bottom).





# Care for anyone, free of charge

- Search and Rescue never charges for any services rendered and responds to all types of needs and demographics.
- Animal rescue is often necessary to prevent further human safety exposures when owners or members of the public take on the rescue themselves.





# Wyoming SAR Collaboration

Members of Park, Bighorn, Teton and Fremont Co SAR learn how to move patients across steep river canyons

Photo credit: Dan Holloway





# Mutual Aid

Park Co SAR, Shell Fire and Wilderness EMS respond to assist Bighorn Co SAR to extricate the victim of a horse accident



# Training and Response budget

- Like HCC funding, State SAR funding requires opening training to other units. This helps ensure cost-effective training and builds relationships for future responses.
- Direct expenses incurred on a call are also reimbursed by the state SAR fund.
- Local training and equipment is purchased by the county, grants or private donations

Above: Park, Washakie, Bighorn and Teton Co SAR learn high angle rescue skills in Shell Canyon.

Right: Teton, Park, Fremont, and Bighorn SAR members train on swiftwater rescue





# Air resources

- Park County's Air One can expand ground search capabilities and pick up emergency locator transmitter (ELT) signals.
- Teton County's helicopter can insert teams into remote terrain, become a portable cell tower to use cell phones for location even when there is no service and provide avalanche beacon and RECCO location.
- All air resources are readily shared with other agencies.



# Partnerships with other government agencies

- Agencies in rural Wyoming all have overlapping response areas and missions.
- SAR units work with city, county, state and federal law enforcement on a routine basis
- In addition, they frequently partner with:
  - National Forest Service
  - National Park Service
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - State Park Service
  - Game and Fish
  - US National Guard
  - US Air Force

# Partnerships with other rescue groups

SAR units collaborate in patient care and rescue with:

- Volunteers ski patrols
- Volunteer fire departments
- Volunteer snow team
- Volunteer backcountry horse teams





## Multi-agency trainings

Eight agencies and 55 responders attended the Sheep Mountain multi-casualty exercise which pushed the limits of response capacity with a simultaneous multi-victim bear mauling and an ice rescue at the nearby reservoir.





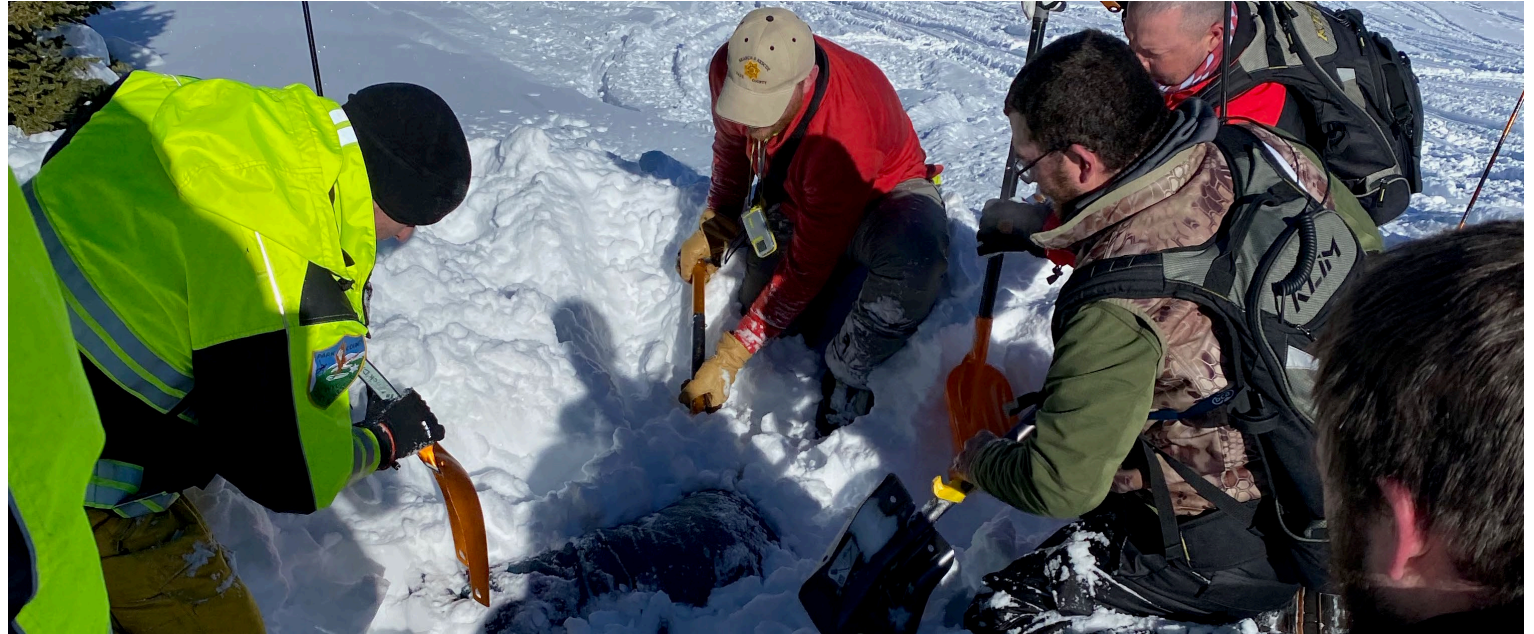
A Bureau of Land Management Ranger, Wilderness Paramedic and a Game and Fish Warden help Park and Bighorn Co SAR treat victims of a bear mauling

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A paramedic teaches an ice rescue team how to use a Lucas device for CPR.





The snow rescue team (a rapid response sub-group of SAR) and North Absaroka Ski Patrol respond to a backcountry multi-agency mock avalanche scenario with Park Co SAR

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# Military

- A helicopter flight crew out of Malmstrom Airforce Base helps search for lost snowmobilers and later helps SAR crews extract the patients, who miraculously survived 2 nights out in sub-zero temperatures.
- The Air National Guard (not pictured) frequently trains with Big Horn Co SAR and brings short-haul capabilities





# Interstate mutual aid

Park Co (WY) SAR assists Carbon Co (MT) SAR in a massive search for a missing hiker





Teams respond when a tourist gets a utility vehicle stuck in a remote draw



SAR water team members watch over triathletes during their open water swim

# Community Outreach





Thank you

Looking down from the top of the  
Beartooths at the Wyoming-Montana border

# Contact ASPR TRACIE



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