



Photo contributed by the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office
Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan shows the sheriff's office's latest big equipment acquisition — a new utility task vehicle capable of rescues over rugged terrain and rough conditions.

New vehicle boosts sheriff's office rescue abilities

By PHIL WRIGHT
 STAFF WRITER

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office has a new tool for responding to major crises. County emergency manager Tom Roberts said the Polaris Ranger Crew XP 1000 EPS Northstar HVAC Edition fills a critical gap for the sheriff's office.

The utility task vehicle arrived July 15 to the sheriff's office. Roberts said it can transport six people in the cab plus has a seat and stretcher in the exterior bed for a patient care provider and someone who is immobile. The rig is for off-road work and runs on snow tracks for winter.

Sheriff Terry Rowan said this was a solid acquisition for the sheriff's office. The patrol division has a similar vehicle for working in off-highway vehicle parks, state parks and the like, he said, but without the capability to transport medics and patients.

Roberts said the need

for this kind of vehicle became apparent on Dec. 31, 2012, when a tour bus carrying dozens of passengers crashed and plummeted down a mountainside near Deadman Pass on Interstate 84 east of Pendleton. Nine people died in that wreck, and 39 suffered injuries, many serious.

"We had to bring in a similar vehicle from Walla Walla to assist with that episode," Roberts said. Since then the emergency management department has worked to get a UTV of its own, seeking funds from the Homeland Security Grant Program under the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The grant program plays an important role in FEMA's National Preparedness System, funding preparedness activities from emergency planning to training to equipment purchases.

"We were finally awarded \$48,838 for the procurement of this unit," Roberts said. The funds also will go toward buying a trailer to

transport it.

Rowan said the grants are not easy to win because they are so competitive. Agencies across the county apply for funds to enhance their ability to respond to emergencies.

"We're just thankful this go-round we had a compelling enough application to get funding," he said.

The sheriff's office will house the vehicle with other equipment for the search and rescue team, and the team will oversee the use of the Polaris. Roberts said he anticipates the team will have ample opportunity to use the UTV. The team each year, particularly during the winter, hustles to mountain areas to help lost hunters and the like.

The sheriff's office aims to have the UTV ready soon, and Rowan said the public can expect to see it working in August at the Umatilla County Fair, where medical teams will put it use taking patients to ambulances if the need arises.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Blaze, a 7-year-old lab mix, drinks from a bucket at Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter (PAWS).

High temperatures can spell disaster for dogs, children left in cars

By JESSICA POLLARD
 STAFF WRITER

The days are long, the pools are open, and temperature predictions are showing highs in the 90s this week. While summertime is a relaxing season for many, it's also a potentially dangerous time for dogs and children left in cars at the mercy of their guardians.

"We haven't taken that many calls this year," Lt. Charles Byram of the Pendleton Police Department said. "The weather is a little milder."

But, Byram said, the calls do happen. Usually in parking lots outside stores like Safeway or Walmart.

Last month in Medford, a man received a felony charge for animal abuse after falling asleep in his home and leaving his dog unattended in a car. The 4-year-old Miniature Pinscher did not survive the incident.

While it might not seem like a big deal to leave a furry companion in the car for a few minutes, the thermometer begs to differ. Temperate

80-degree weather can cause a car to heat up to 99 degrees in 10 minutes, according to the Humane Society.

Byram said within an hour, the temperature in a car could rise 30 to 50 degrees from the outside temperature.

"You're putting them at risk for heat stroke and possibly death," said Umatilla County Public Health deputy director Alisha Southwick. "Rolling down the window is not enough. It doesn't help."

Hermiston Police Department Chief Jason Edmiston said that in Hermiston, calls about animals in cars increase in the summer.

This year, the department has handled nearly 300 dog-related calls but that it's hard to say how many of those calls were caused by owners leaving pets in cars.

He said the department prefers to have police officers, rather than code enforcement, handle these calls.

In 2017 it became legal in Oregon to break into a motor vehicle to rescue a child or

domestic animal.

Anyone who does so is required to stay at the scene until law enforcement arrives. But it must first be determined that the vehicle is locked, and that there is no way for the child or animal to escape the vehicle. It must also be determined that the entry is necessary because the subject is in imminent harm.

But what does imminent harm look like?

Dogs suffering from heat stroke can be found panting more than usual, drooling and acting drowsy, and possibly even vomiting, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. They might have gums and tongues that look redder than normal, too.

Byram said if someone spots an animal, or even a child, in a parked car who looks to be in danger, it might be better to call the police department before taking action, if time allows it.

"We're there in a matter of minutes," he said.

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