

This year's fire threat demands extra diligence from all of us.

Emergency traffic assistance volunteers met at Chris Brock's to go over the need for this critical team and those lessons learned from previous incidents about this very important mountain emergency matter.

Members of this team can be called into action at any time—day or night. Typically you will be asked to stage (meet) at the "T". There you will be issued a reflective vest and instructions for your assignment. You will likely be positioned at one of the intersections emergency vehicles will pass along their way to the incident. This seemingly simple task is CRITICAL in getting them to the scene without any wrong turns. At least 1 or 2 team members will remain at the "T", handing out maps that have the route highlighted, and any additional information we can provide that would be helpful to them—especially if they are not familiar with our community roads.

The need for ETA volunteers to be discrete in sharing any information about the incident with anyone OTHER THAN fellow SMERT volunteers or emergency responders is imperative. The confidentiality of the individuals involved in the incident is foremost.

Readiness was our first issue. We discussed setting up a go-pack and the items to include. Cold weather and rain gear, flash lights, FRS radio, snacks and water and area maps topped the list. A cautionary note about the use of FRS radios—DO NOT set your radio to voice activated (VOX). This can prevent critical information from being shared because of an open channel.

While 6.1 is the primary channel monitored by SMERT members, the ETA team will often be "bumped up" to 7.1 on certain incidents. This will prevent overlapping conversations between teams. At least one ETA team member on the incident should be prepared to monitor more than one channel—hence the potential need for 2 team members at the "T".

It was noted that due to the "line of sight" reception on FRS radios, all team members may not be able to be heard by the dispatcher. Karen's home radio is more powerful than the FRS radios and it is highly likely you will be able to hear her instructions even if she can't hear you. Because of this it is important each team member learn how to relay radio traffic so all keep informed. Extraneous conversation between team members on the radio is to be avoided.

Driveway conditions and what the first responders would need to know about approach and entry was recently learned to be an important task of the ETA volunteer staged at the entrance to the scene.

Traffic assistance includes having an ETA team member near the scene making sure all vehicles are parked on one side of the road only to prevent blocking the

road for the larger vehicles coming from Loveland. With the assurance of a team member at this location, it provides peace of mind to those individuals who are asked to leave keys in their vehicle.

If you have been assigned as a “lead vehicle” to personally take the first emergency vehicle directly to the scene—do not, under any circumstances, relinquish this responsibility to another party, however well-intentioned or informed. A previous incident taught us those individuals may not know to always keep the following vehicle IN SIGHT causing them to perhaps miss a turn or make the wrong turn.

Maps and safety vests will be provided to ETA volunteers—sometimes in advance, others at the “T” upon receiving your assignment.

Planning a “drive about” with FRS radios to learn more local specific information might be helpful. Also, we also discussed having an ETA drill at the next fire school/burn session.

Assisting first responders to emergencies is so important in an isolated mountain community. We have only each other to rely on when things go bad. Consequently, SMERT needs all the volunteers it can get for this important team.

People go on vacation, go to work or the store, and may not be available. Without a large pool of volunteer phone numbers at hand, David and Pat Maslowski, our team leaders, may not be able to contact enough volunteers to do the job. Why don't you contact SMERT today to add your phone number to their list? Call David or Pat Maslowski, 461-3870 to add your name to their list of willing volunteers, or Matt Charboneau 663-5949.