



Wayne NF & Rural Fire Department Work Together to save lives

Ward Twp Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department average 54 emergency runs/year to rescue OHV riders injured on the Forest's Monday Creek Trails. The Wayne looks for new ways to assist these volunteers.



Ward Township volunteers and the laptop computer donated through the Wayne NF.

The Ward Township Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department has been a life-saving partner of the Wayne National Forest for several years. This year the Athens District Ranger formalized the partnership to enable the Forest to contribute to the trail rescue missions.

Wheels, engines and riders combined with speed, will inevitably lead to injuries. Thanks to the Ward Township Fire and Rescue Department, most of the injuries which occur on the 60 miles of the Monday Creek OHV trails result in temporary disabilities only.

The Ward Township Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department literally saves lives on the Wayne National Forest. In an average year they average 54 emergency runs to assist injured riders in the Monday Creek Trail System. On some weekends they might make 3-4 separate runs for medical emergencies.

Bill Scripp, Recreation Technician on the Athens District, has been working with the group of twenty some volunteers.

"The Monday Creek area falls within their area, and they do an incredible job out there helping people who are hurt on the trails," Scripp says. "So far this year they've had three people airlifted out, and no one has died. Quick competent medical response really makes the difference."

The Ward Township department was organized to serve the local people who live in the area, Scripp explained. They were trained to put out fires and help with emergency medical needs.

"Our trail system and high number of users was really putting a tremendous burden on the township volunteers," noted Scripp. "It became a quandary when they were being subsidized by the locals to help them, but spending most of their time out on the Wayne rescuing injured off-highway vehicle (OHV) riders."

The Wayne stepped up to find ways that they could help.

"Since we provide the land base and invite the visitors to the area, I feel we have a responsibility to assist when a local group is adversely impacted," said DeVela Clark, Athens District Ranger. "Several of us met with them and looked for some solutions to help ease some of their burden."

Clark said he was pleased with the results.

"We were able to get a laptop donated for them and \$1500 worth of rescue equipment to be used on trail rescues," Clark noted. "Since the type of rescue they were being called on to do is a fairly specialized type of operation they needed an all terrain vehicle called a 'gator' that had the capability to carry a stretcher on the side."

The Forest was able to help them procure some of this equipment. Another piece of unique equipment the department needed was GPS units. Clark explained that with 75 miles of trail, the injuries are often called in by other riders giving only GPS coordinates. For the rescuers to find the downed riders, they need to be able to use a GPS unit as well.

Scripp explains the laptop will help them keep records and track who they've rescued.

"Previously they didn't have a computer," Scripp said. "The department knew that it was possible to bill the private insurance companies for a lot of these rescues but before they could do that, they needed a data base and to be able to keep track of dates and names and addresses."

Now they have a laptop computer and access to a program that will help them bill private insurance companies so they should be able to be reimbursed for many of the runs they make on the Wayne.