Teton County Search and Rescue

Jackson, Wyoming

Case Study

At a Glance

Team
- All volunteer, under the Sheriff's office since 1993

Size
- 46 volunteers, more than 150 missions in 2025

Area Covered
- 4,216 square miles, about 97% public land

Ground
- Grand Teton, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Yellowstone, the National Elk Refuge

Vehicle
- Ford Bronco, donated by Ford's Bronco Wild Fund, built out by Darley and Public Safety Direct

In the Vehicle
- Starlink Mini, a Motorola APX 8500 the team supplied, roof rack and cargo box, 100Ah aux battery, 1000w inverter, shore power plug, winch, slick top

Drones
- None

The Job
- Get four rescuers, their packs and a wheeled litter out the door



The Jurisdiction

Teton County is 4,216 square miles and about 97 percent public land.

The ground is split between Grand Teton, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Yellowstone and the National Elk Refuge. The team is all volunteer, works under the Sheriff's Office, and never charges for a rescue. They go out for hikers, horse wrecks, ATV and mountain bike crashes, hurt hunters, and falls off trail that need rope work. Most of the driving is forest service roads and two tracks.





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The Problems

Getting People to the Trailhead

Almost every call starts by moving four rescuers, four packs and a wheeled litter to the end of a road. Then they walk. The litter comes apart in two pieces so the team can split the weight.

"Sometimes we have to go five, six miles to get to somebody."

Doug Vanhouten, Teton County SAR

Their Truck is Too Big for the Last Stretch

The pickup carries everything they own but can't get down the tight roads.

Radio Holes

The county network covers most of the area. There are a few spots where it doesn't, and a crew in one of them has no way to reach anybody.

Vehicles That Sit

Some weeks they run every day. Some months the rig doesn't move at all, and the batteries pay for it.

How They Use the Rapid Command Bronco

The first thing Teton did was turn down the command build. VanHouten looked at the two Broncos Darley had already done for command and intel work and said what was in the back was probably overkill for what they needed.

"We're not doing very much vehicle based command and control, because we're out in the field helping somebody that fell off a horse."

Doug Vanhouten, Teton County SAR

They run command from a fixed location. So the space went to gear and people instead. The litter rides on the roof. It's one of their most used tools, and keeping it loaded takes a step out of every callout. In winter it comes off and skis go up there. The back stays open for four people and their packs, with one drawer for recovery gear. The size is the part that shows up on every call.

"The Bronco is way shorter. Get into tighter spots than we can with that full size pickup truck."

Michael Estes, Teton County SAR

The pickup follows behind with the trailer and the heavy gear. For the radio holes, they paired Starlink with a Motorola APX 8500 they pulled from their own stock. That radio can pass traffic over Wi-Fi, so where the county network stops, the vehicle becomes the way out.

"We have a couple dead spots. That's going to be our communication tool, is that vehicle."

Doug Vanhouten, Teton County SAR

The lights stay hidden. Teton doesn't run emergency lights on rescues, and the rest of their fleet looks unmarked until somebody flips a switch, so the Bronco was built the same way.