



State EMS Awards Book of Recognition



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The Meritorious Service Medal recognizes an individual for a particular act of meritorious service in EMS.

First Responder of the Year

Chris Dode, First Responder Mercy Flights – Explorer Post

Chris Dode joined the Explorer Post at Mercy Flights three years ago because of his interest in becoming a Firefighter/EMT. Chris volunteers approximately 250 hours of community service per year.

Chris really enjoys all of the activities and community service aspects of Exploring. In addition to being a participant, he has been a leader within the post. Chris was selected Post President and has been selected Explorer of the Year for the past two years. As Post president, he took an active role in recruiting and encouraging new members, ensuring consistent participation in events and fundraising efforts. Chris was awarded the National Exploring Leadership Award in 2002. In 2001, Chris served on medical staff with our Post at the National Boy Scout Jamboree near Washington DC.

Chris also finds time to volunteer with Jackson County Fire District #3, serving as a student sleeper firefighter at the Gold Hill Station. He has completed Basic Fire Academy and is currently enrolled in EMS-Fire Science at Rogue Community College. Chris is now serving as a part-time Community Service Officer with the Medford Police Department. He has consistently been an asset on emergency scenes. Chris is courteous, professional and a pleasure to work with.

Last year, Chris' father unexpectedly passed away and he has been very supportive to his mother and entire family. His leadership has been integral to Post 131 being ranked second in the nation among youth emergency service programs by VFIS Insurance Services.

Chris is an excellent example of a young man who has goals in his life and a willingness to work hard to achieve them.



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EMT of the Year – Basic

Shirley Mattson, EMT-Basic Swisshome/Deadwood Fire Department

Shirley "Pat" Mattson joined the Swisshome/Deadwood Fire department in 1986. She became a First Responder in 1987 and was certified in 1988 as an EMT Basic.

Since joining, she has responded to approximately 70% of all fire and medical calls in her district over the last 16 years. In addition, Pat has attended nearly all of the monthly QRT training classes.

Pat has the gift of calming distressed patients, family, and bystanders on calls while providing the essential basic life support that was needed. From holding a patient's hand or holding someone's head with a neck fracture, to consoling a family with the loss of a loved one, Pat has always been there. She has made such a wonderful difference in so many lives.

Pat is being forced to step down for health reasons. Her body is telling her to slow down, yet her heart and spirit still has the "EMS bug." In addition, believe us, she is not going nicely (kicking and screaming). Pat still loves helping others and says she is going to miss responding to calls a lot.

We, the SwissHome/Deadwood Fire Department and Western Lane Ambulance District, are so pleased with her uncompensated and always humble 16 plus years of service to our customers.

Thank you, Shirley for your dedication and compassion over the years to Oregon EMS.

Thank you, Chris for your professionalism and dedication to Oregon EMS.



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EMT of the Year – Intermediate

Ben C. Bishop, EMT- Intermediate Halfway-Oxbow Ambulance Service

Ben C. Bishop is a key member of the all-volunteer Halfway-Oxbow Ambulance Service in the tiny northeast Oregon town of Halfway. Ben first volunteered with this service in 1985, when he became an EMT Basic. He has since upgraded his training and has become a skillful, knowledgeable EMT Intermediate.

The Halfway-Oxbow Ambulance Service area stretches from the Wallowa Mountains to the Snake River. The closest hospital is in Baker City at least an hour away. Because of the long travel times, volunteers with this service must often intervene to keep patients viable and alive.

Ben attends regular monthly business meetings and trainings to keep his skills sharp. He keeps abreast of developments in the EMS field and shares information with other volunteers as well.

He maintains, researches and recommends new equipment, often meeting with factory reps, and then training other volunteers on the use new tools. Ben was on the committee that recently oversaw the planning and building of a new clinic/ambulance facility in Halfway.

Ben gives freely of his time and talent in many ways and is an inspiration to his fellow volunteers on the Halfway-Oxbow Ambulance Service.

Thank you, Ben for your contributions, and commitment to Oregon EMS.



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EMT of the Year – Paramedic

Dave Pickhardt, EMT-P Redmond Fire & Rescue

Dave Pickhardt currently serves Redmond Fire & Rescue as the “B” shift Division Chief, and the EMS Chief Officer. Prior to becoming a Firefighter/ Paramedic with Redmond Fire & Rescue, Dave worked for Corvallis Fire Department where he began his career in 1988 as a student firefighter. Dave attended Oregon State University and Western Oregon University graduating with a BS in Fire Service Administration/ Business Administration. He completed his EMT training at Linn Benton Community College in 1989.

Dave has always been one of the most caring and talented patient care providers that I have had contact with in my 23 years in EMS. He is an excellent communicator, both with his patients and his co-workers. He has been very active in regional education and patient care issues, having instructed various courses with the EMS Programs at COCC, and serving in the role of Vice Chair of the East Cascades EMS Council. This 2001 President’s Award winning organization is responsible for regional patient care protocols, computer ambulance report writing project, and other educational programs. Dave has spearhead the ECEMS Protocol Committee for several years, and was instrumental in the Central Oregon regional support of the Oregon EMS Conference held in Redmond in 2002, and again in September of 2003.

Dave Pickhardt is most deserving of the Paramedic of the Year Award, as he continuously personifies the best of the best in Oregon EMS, and is a true patient advocate.

Thank you, Dave for your dedication and compassion to Oregon EMS.



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EMS Educator of the Year

Reta Warner, EMT-Intermediate Wallowa County Health Care District

In 1996, while instructing an EMT Basic class at Wallowa Memorial Hospital, I became acquainted with a rather timid student, Reta Warner. She was nervous and seemed to lack self-confidence. I doubted she would pass the State exam, let alone work on our ambulance service. I could not have been more wrong! From that inauspicious start, Reta Warner has developed into one of the most valuable and dedicated EMTs on this service.

Reta's innate ability is readily apparent and she has focused that same energy into teaching. She taught her first EMT basic class with zeal and professionalism. Since that first class, Reta has not looked back. What differentiates Reta's classes from others is the tremendous degree of preparation and dedication to her students. If the class is struggling with a difficult concept, Reta will spend dozens of hours, not to mention her own money, developing props or teaching aids to help students better understand. She became an Oregon State Certifying Officer, a committee member to develop an eastside paramedic program through Blue Mountain Community College, and formally acknowledged as the Education Coordinator for Wallowa Memorial Hospital.

Reta Warner's value and dedication to EMS and her peers does not end with her education abilities and accomplishments. In 2000, she was instrumental in the adoption of a new pay scale and uniform allowance approved by management. When pandemonium reigns supreme, we count on Reta - who remains calm, cool, and collected. In conclusion, Reta Warner has proven to be a "Most Valuable Player" in every respect.

Thank you, Reta for your dedication and compassion to EMS in Oregon.



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EMS Medical Director of the Year

Dr Matthew Eschelbach, D.O. Redmond, Oregon

Dr. Matthew Eschelbach was born in Red Bank, New Jersey, and attended Rutgers College. He graduated from OSU with a Masters Degree in 1984. He completed medical school in 1988, he then completed his residency from the University of New Jersey in 1989, and senior residency from Kennedy Memorial Hospital in 1991. He was board certified in Emergency Medicine by the American Association of Physician Specialists in 1998.

Dr. Matt, as he is kindly referred to by Paramedic's and EMT's at Redmond Fire and Rescue, is married to Jeanine and has three wonderful kids. He has been active in Emergency Medicine for nearly 15 years, having joined Central Oregon's EMS community in 1991. Dr. Matt has held positions with Mountain View Hospital, High Desert Medicine, and Pioneer Memorial Hospital. Dr. Matt is currently the Faculty Medical Director of COCH in Redmond and he is Medical Director for Redmond Fire and Rescue, Sun River Fire and La Pine Rural Fire District.

If we could only imagine and wish for a Physician who would be such a vocal advocate and supporter of Emergency Medical Services, it would be Dr. Matt Eschelbach. He is very respected by Paramedic's and EMT's throughout the region, and is always positive during contact in the emergency department. Dr. Matt is active in ACLS education and is Chairman of Region 7 ATAB. He serves as Medical Director for the East Cascades EMS Council, and authored the regions EMS Protocols. He is the Medical Director for the 2003 State EMS Conference scheduled for Redmond this coming September.

Dr. Matt, through hard work, dedicated service, and a keen ability to make those around him feel like part of the EMS team, has proved that he is most deserving of the award of Medical Director of the Year.

Thank you, Dr. Matt for your compassion and dedication to Oregon EMS.



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EMS Administrator of the Year

George Heckathorn, EMT-Paramedic Jefferson County EMS

George Heckathorn currently serves Jefferson County EMS as the Administrator and the EMS Chief Officer. Prior to becoming a Paramedic with Jefferson County EMS, George completed his EMT training at St Vincent Hospital in 1979 and then worked for Metro West Ambulance beginning there in 1980. In 1985 he returned to Madras, Oregon and took a full time position with Jefferson County EMS.

George is an exemplary leader. He is introspective and quietly assesses the ever-changing needs of his department, (which in itself can be a challenge), balancing the needs of both paid and volunteer staff. He is astute in his budgetary skills and under his guidance has brought Jefferson County EMS to a point of Financial Independence from Tax Bonds or Levies. The agency provides service that utilizes apparatus that is technologically modern, fully equipped and superbly maintained. George has established a student program at Jefferson County EMS and fully supports the education and training of new EMTs in the Central Oregon Area by working in conjunction with COCC to provide internships for Paramedic Students. He encourages and supports the ongoing training of all staff, paid and volunteer by providing the ability for staff to attend conferences and education venues such as the Oregon EMS Conference.

George is, in all respects, a true leader and exemplifies the EMS Administrator of the Year. He is interactive with all members of his organization, and his community, he promotes relationships and maintains those relationships to the betterment of his organization and community.

Thank you, George for your compassion and dedication to EMS in Oregon.