



Just the Facts!

The **BearCat**

What it is and *what it is not!*

*Attached are some actual situations where the **BearCat** has been a critical tool. These are just a very few of the incidents where the **Bearcat** armored rescue vehicle has been used successfully in rural areas like ours.*

The **BearCat** Rescue vehicle is an armored vehicle intended to protect your Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters who volunteer as members of the All Hazards Response Team (AHRT). This team is a Northwest Homeland Security Region resource that is funded, in part, by Homeland Security. AHRT is a multi-level response team that participates in extremely dangerous and high risk situations from tactical law enforcement operations to assisting with hazardous materials (hazmat) responses.

On average, AHRT responds to 14 critical situations per year in Garfield County and other surrounding Northwest Region jurisdictions. These types of responses, whether law enforcement or hazmat related, go beyond the average call for service because of the extreme elements of danger and require a specialized, trained and practiced team to respond. Providing protective equipment such as bulletproof vests, shields, hazmat gear, *and* the **BearCat** is essential to protect those who serve to protect you!

The **BearCat** is equally important for the protection of our citizens in that it can be used to rescue someone who may become an injured victim of a school shooting, mall shooting or other violent act. Unknown to many, AHRT regularly trains in our schools and other locations to prepare for what we all hope will never happen. Unfortunately, as we know by listening to the national news, these tragic events occur far too often and they occur in rural communities, too.

It is critical that your law enforcement agencies prepare for what is “possible”, not just probable; and part of that preparation includes taking whatever steps are necessary to protect our responding law enforcement and fire personnel. I have no doubt that if you or a family member were such a victim, you would want us to do everything within our power to save your life. The **BearCat** gives us the ability to execute all available options.

What the **BearCat** is **NOT**, is a tank. **Nor** is it an attack vehicle. **Nor** is it armed with any type of weapons. I'm sorry to disappoint our critics, but there are no .50 caliber machine guns attached nor is there a flame thrower! It is a rescue vehicle and motorized personal protective gear for those responding to dangerous situations.

The decision to purchase the **BearCat** was based in part on two recent Law Enforcement Officer shootings in Garfield County. One involved a Glenwood Springs Police Officer who was shot in the evening hours in an area of open terrain. The responding officers as well as AHRT had little to no protection from the shooter while responding to aid the officer. Had the shooter taken the position to harm more officers, he would have been able to easily target those responding as there was little protection available.

The second shooting involved a Colorado State Trooper who was shot while conducting a traffic stop south of the town of Silt. Even though the assailant fled, we knew he was hiding in the area and the members of AHRT had to go from rural building to building, approaching on foot in an attempt to capture the shooter. While approaching, the only protection they had was the bulletproof vests they were wearing. Again, had the shooter established a location to try to kill members of the team, he would have had ample opportunity as they were quite vulnerable! However, if the team had the **BearCat**, they would have been able to approach in a protected vehicle and minimize their exposure.

The **BearCat** cost \$236,000 and, of course, spending that amount of tax dollars deserves scrutiny and accountability. Let me draw a comparison to the millions of dollars of fire fighting equipment that is stationed across the firehouses in our county. In today's world of fire retardant materials, sprinkler systems, etc., there is little chance that your home or business will catch on fire. On the other hand, as tax payers, don't you expect our fire departments to be prepared and purchase that equipment in case your house does begin to burn? In the world of law enforcement, we must also be prepared for the highly unlikely, BUT possible tragic event; and there is NO price tag you can put on the life of a police officer who is out there protecting you.

Finally, there is the fear factor; the idea that such a piece of equipment is even needed in our safe community. As the chief law enforcement officer in Garfield County, I can assure you that our community is a safe place to live. What I can not tell you is that we live in a quieter and safer world like the one we grew up in. Times have changed, and we can't turn the clock back even though we would like to. In 2005, the Garfield County Sheriff's Office responded to an average of 96 calls for service per day. As of the first quarter of this year, we are averaging over 230! In the past few years, there have been two police officers shot in our county. Prior to that, I am unable to find a record of ANY police officer shootings. In the past ten years, there has been an increase (and fortunately a recent decrease) of Methamphetamine use, which drives addicts to a state of paranoia and violence.

Times, events and circumstances have changed, and it is my absolute responsibility to change with them and provide the best possible protection for you as well as the law enforcement officers that are serving you. I hope you will agree that the **BearCat** is simply another level of needed protection for all of you. Please come see it for yourself and learn the truth. The **BearCat** is proudly displayed to the community at events including Touch-a-Trucks, Bicycle Rodeos, etc.

Lou Vallario
Sheriff
05/20/10

December 2008: rural Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. Deputies arrested a 50 year old man after a five hour standoff related to a domestic violence incident. The Deputies were driven away as he threatened them with a rifle and shotgun. The Deputies then approached with their BearCat and were fired on by the suspect. The male was then taken into custody. It was clear that the use of the BearCat saved lives on both sides of the confrontation.

November 2009: Avon, Colorado: Garfield County All Hazards Response Team responds to assist Avon Police Department and the Eagle County Special Operations Unit for a suicidal barricaded male inside a residence. With the use of the BearCat, the tactical teams approached the house where the front door was breached. The male was contacted by Deputies and safely taken into custody.

February 2010: rural Minkler, California. Two BearCats were used to rescue and evacuate multiple Deputies after a suspect opened fire on them from his trailer. Two officers were killed and one was wounded during the incident. The suspect eventually shot and killed himself. The BearCats and responding Officers were credited with saving many more from harm as they drove into the line of fire to help evacuate those who were pinned down.

April 2008: rural Richland County, Wisconsin. A man was finally apprehended after an intense armed standoff between him and several law enforcement agencies. The suspect had exchanged over five hundred rounds and thrown 15 military style grenades at Deputies as they approached his home in three BearCats. All of the BearCats sustained direct hits and protected all of the Deputies within the vehicles. The suspect was eventually arrested through the use of non-lethal force.



Broadcaster)

(Matt Johnson Photo: Vernon County

"If you're not already aware, the first two months of 2010 saw an alarming, deadly start for law enforcement. According to the [Officer Down Memorial Page](#), there have been 33 U.S. line of duty deaths so far in 2010, compared with 17 in 2009. Disturbingly, the number of gunfire line of duty deaths during January and February has skyrocketed from two in 2009 to 10 in 2010.

(source: Robert O'Brien, Police Magazine)