

## **Boone County Water Rescue**

Boone County Water Rescue (BCWR), established in 1967 under the direction of the Boone County (KY) Civil Defense program, is a group of dedicated volunteers who work more than 12,000 hours annually in water rescue activities. Currently a branch of the Boone County Emergency Management Services, and administered on a not-for-profit basis by the Boone County (KY) Fiscal Court, the team is available 24/7 to all governmental agencies.

Since its origin, the foundation of the team has been based on its diving abilities. Countless hours are spent training new divers and sharpening the skills of accomplished ones. In addition to the general diver certification, each diver is trained under a public safety diver program and as a search and rescue diver.

The team also has ice rescue capabilities. With three certified dive and ice rescue instructors, basic ice rescue classes are taught in the winter months to fire departments, police departments, and other area rescue agencies.

Certified EMTs were later added to give emergency pre-hospital care and provide medical and trauma services on water and land. All Boone County Water Rescue EMTs are Kentucky certified and are crucial in maintaining a medically safe environment for divers during rescue, recovery or training operations. During patrol, each boat has onboard an EMT who is trained and equipped to administer emergency medical treatment. Many BCWR team EMTs are affiliated with fire departments and squads throughout Boone (KY) and Kenton (KY) counties.

The most visual part of the team is its water rescue units. General purpose work and rescue boats are used for lakes and rivers. These boats are easily transported and can be disbursed throughout Northern Kentucky and beyond. But the pride of the water rescue vessels are boats 218 and 219 (219 is essentially a floating ambulance, complete with a defibrillator). These two boats are fully equipped with state-of-the-art sonar, radar, and communications, which dramatically increases the capability and efficiency of these vessels for any type of water rescue or recovery.

Speed and equipment are meaningless without qualified personnel. On board every boat is an EMT, fire personnel and rescue divers. Boone County Water Rescue offers many services to its surrounding geographic area and other states: water safety programs, boat patrols, evidence collection, vehicle, bus, aircraft recovery and victim recovery. No other governmental body in the region provides such an array of services for boaters.

The team's capabilities include the use of the most sophisticated electronic equipment on the market - side scan sonar (Marine Sonic Technology) and underwater cameras (Fisher). The side scan sonar not only reduces the risk to divers but has made recovery efforts faster. Systems include the ability to transmit (wireless) the video image and side scan sonar imaging to other boats and land-based operations. These systems have been instrumental in locating victims, automobiles, barges, boats, weapons and just about anything under the water.

Of course, after the object is found the mission turns to recovery. BCWR divers use Exo-26s and SuperLites 17 (surface supply air) with full communication, and dive cameras that also transmit to the command center, boats and dive supervisors for review.

For more than 39 years the Boone County Water Rescue team is proud of their various associations with neighboring counties, states and manufacturers. The team is ready to respond to any water

rescue emergency effort - at any time, in any place. They are prepared, knowledgeable and proud to serve their communities.

The primary goal continues to be the recovery of drowning victims as quickly as possible to bring closure to families suffering from the loss of a loved one. As communities grow and water activities increase, more volunteers, training and equipment will be needed. If you are interested in becoming a member of the crew, an EMT or a diver for the team, your participation is welcome. Each person on the team makes a difference and working together makes a difference in the community. Go to on [www.bcwr-ky.com](http://www.bcwr-ky.com) for more information.

"The Boone County Water Rescue team members have been long time members of the IADRS and have supported teams nationwide through the exchange of information and resources. They are one of the most progressive water rescue teams in North America and have been role models for many IADRS members. Since 1967, they have been one of the pioneers of water rescue and have developed, tested, and revised many of the techniques used by water rescue and recovery teams today. We all owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude...."

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