



Emmet County News Release

For more information, please contact:

Stacy Cox - Communications Director
(231) 348-1704 or scox@emmetcounty.org

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Emmet County Adds Three More Critical Care Paramedics

Emmet County Emergency Medical Services boosted its level of expertise in February after three of the department's paramedics completed training in University of Maryland, Baltimore County Critical Care Emergency Medical Transport Program (CCEMTP).

Dave Davis, Michelle Hitner and Mikayla Thorman finished 100 hours of continuing education and passed an exam last month to earn certification in the CCEMTP from UMBC.

Emmet County EMS now has eight paramedics on staff with the critical care certification including Amanda Godin, Jason Granger, Sierra Hilt, Aaron Maltby and Shawn Wachtel. The department not only covers all of Emmet County but Cheboygan County's Mackinac Township and parts of Hebron Township as well as parts of Charlevoix County's Chandler Township and Melrose Township.



Mikayla Thorman, Michelle Hitner and Dave Davis hold their certificate of completion in the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Critical Care Emergency Medical Transport Program after attending 100 hours of classroom instruction and passing an exam in February.

The recent course completed by Davis, Hitner and Thorman was sponsored by and held at North Central Michigan College with instruction provided by the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Department of Emergency Health Services.

"People came from all over the state to take the course," said Hitner, who has worked in EMS for more than 20 years. "People from the UP, Detroit and other areas downstate traveled here for it, during some terrible weather. We were lucky it was so close."

The three local paramedics also expressed how fortunate they were that the county paid for them to take the course. Many of the others attending had to pay for the program on their own while also taking time off from their paying jobs.

"We really appreciated that," said Hitner. "We were able to just focus on what we were learning and could spend the time studying when we weren't in class."

The intense instruction trained the paramedics in providing care for patients in critical situations overwhelmingly focused on problems related to the heart and lungs, including training in the utilization of a mechanical ventilator, mechanical cardiac monitor, intra-aortic balloon pump, ventricular assist devices and hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Though the three were appreciative of the increased knowledge and how it will help to save lives in the future, they also noted real-world experience is not exactly something they look forward to gaining.

"We'd like to use what we learned, but that usually means something bad has happened to someone else," said Davis.

Thorman explained how paramedics certified in the critical care emergency medical transport program are as capable as those in medical helicopters. With eight critical care paramedics, Emmet County EMS can provide transport when flight crews cannot.

"With that same level of care a patient gets in the medical helicopter, we can transport patients from one ICU [intensive care unit] to another," Thorman said, citing an example of a patient suffering from serious burns needing transferred to a hospital specializing in treatment for burn patients.

"For a rural EMS to have this capability is amazing," said Randy Weston, Director of Emergency Medical Services for Emmet County. He said so many of the department's calls are outside of city limits and, when each minute counts, having eight paramedics on staff trained in critical care could mean the difference between life or death.

"It was such a big undertaking and I want to congratulate them for their dedication," continued Weston. "Not only did they spend 10 hours a day for 10 days in class, but they also spent hours after that studying to pass the certification exam at the end of the course. I'm really proud of them."

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