

## **SWEETWATER BOMB SQUAD TECHNICIANS COMPLETE SEGWAY TRAINING**

Bomb technicians of the Sweetwater Bomb Squad recently completed training on two state-of-the-art Segways purchased by the Sweetwater Bomb Squad, Sweetwater County Sheriff Rich Haskell said today.

Haskell said the Bomb Squad funded purchase of the Segways with Department of Homeland Security grant funds. Cost of the two units, which are Model X2s, was \$6,591.32 apiece for a total of \$13,182.64.

Segways are two-wheeled, single-passenger electric vehicles first produced in 2002. The operator stands upright while operating the Segway, On-board computers, motors, and gyroscopes keep a Segway upright when it is powered.

“Operating a Segway is simple,” Sheriff’s Office Detective Tony Niemiec, a bomb technician assigned to the Squad, explained. “The operator leans forward to go forward, leans back to go backward, and steers left or right with the ‘lean steer’ handlebar. They are so maneuverable that they can turn in a full circle on their own axis.”

The Segway is capable of speeds in the neighborhood of 12 miles per hour and have a range of 12 to 15 miles on a single battery charge.

Haskell explained that the Segways were purchased because of the heavy Med-Eng EOD-8 bomb suits worn by bomb technicians when dealing with an explosive device. The suits weigh 80 pounds and bomb technicians often have to cover long distances from a staging area to a bomb’s location.

Said Haskell, himself a bomb technician while serving as a county detective, “Walking a long way in an EOD suit wears you down and makes you less effective when you finally reach the explosive device. In addition, if you’re working in certain environments, you’re using a self-contained breathing apparatus and you’ve only got half an hour or so of breathing air. Every minute counts, and a Segway gets you there faster and without the fatigue.”

Detective Niemiec and Corporal Debby Tippy and Officer Doug Lauze of the Green River Police Department learned special Segway operation techniques while wearing the EOD suits. “Even getting off and on the Segway in the EOD suit takes getting used to,” Tippy said.

Bomb Squad members expressed special thanks to Jim Lever of Green River, who made the old Sweetwater Ford building available for the training.

According to Haskell, Segways are now used by over 700 law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and security organizations nationwide, including the Albuquerque Police Department, the Chicago Police Department, the Ventura County, California, Sheriff’s Department Bomb Squad, the Glendale, Arizona, Fire Department, and the Salt Lake City International Airport Police.

“I believe the Sweetwater Bomb Squad is the first local law enforcement unit in Wyoming to have them,” he said, noting that the United States Air Force employs them at Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne.

The Sweetwater Bomb Squad is comprised of law enforcement officers of the Sweetwater County Sheriff’s Office and the Rock Springs and Green River Police Departments. The Squad serves Sweetwater County, Carbon County, Sublette County, (working in conjunction with the Teton Bomb Squad, based on Jackson), the southern half of Lincoln County, and Uinta County. The team has also answered emergency calls for service in Daggett County, Utah.

The unit responded to 32 calls for service in 2008 and destroyed 16 explosives devices or packages of old explosives, including blasting caps and dynamite.

Haskell said the Squad will be using the new Segways in conjunction with the unit’s bomb disposal robot, a Remotec Andros Mark V-A1, which was purchased in 2008 with Department of Homeland Security funding through a special network of agencies, including the Sweetwater County, Uinta County, Sublette County, and Lincoln County Sheriff’s Offices, the Rock Springs, Green River, Bairoil, and Wamsutter Police Departments, the Rock Springs and Green River Fire Departments, Sweetwater County Fire District #1, the Sweetwater Airport, and Memorial Hospital of Sweetwater County.

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Photo Captions:



Photo #1 - Doug Lauze of the Green River Police Remotec Andros Mark V-A1 Department on one of the new Bomb Squad Segways, maneuvering near the Squad’s Remotec Andros Mark V-A1 robot.



Photo #2 - One of the new Sweetwater Bomb Squad Segways.



Photo #3 - Detective Tony Niemiec aboard one of the Sweetwater Bomb Squad's new Segways.



Photo #4 - Corporal Debby Tippy of the Green River Police Department, center, suiting up for training in an 80-pound Sweetwater Bomb Squad bomb suits. Officer Doug Lauze, at left, and Detective Tony Niemiec, at right, assist.