



SWIFT WATER RESCUE: Alton Fire Department's specially trained crew, Jersey, QEM teams, bring 10 to safety

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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SPANKEY - Rescuers had their hands full Monday in the Spankey area along Macoupin Creek in Jersey County, but they successfully brought 10 people and several dogs to safety.

Jersey County and QEM both put out mutual aid emergency assist calls at 8:30 a.m. on Monday.

Alton Fire Department Chief Bernie Sebold and his specially trained rescue team responded and were asked to perform a swift water rescue in the Spankey area, he said.

Spankey is an unincorporated community in Jersey County, located about two miles east of the Illinois River.

“While we are trained to do that sort of thing we don’t have a boat that can perform that kind of rescue,” Sebold said. “We requested that the Illinois Department of Natural Resources bring a boat to the scene. Once we got there we discovered we had multiple people to rescue in cabin-like homes on a road called Spankey Lane with Fieldon addresses.”



The water situation increased from about 10-foot deep levels to 30-foot from creek spill over water that would normally be well away from homes, but was now lapping at their front doorsteps. The water raged swiftly through the creek and made it impossible for the families to walk to safety.

“When we got there, we met with the QEM fire chief and the Jersey County Sheriff’s Department people,” Sebold said.

The rescue crew formulated a plan and went to work with the assistance of a person with a commercial fishing boat. Two of those rescued were children under age 2 and also a 12-year-old was rescued in the group, Sebold said

“The individuals definitely needed to be evacuated from their homes,” Sebold said. “It was a very coordinated effort. Two of the Alton Fire Department personnel were sent in water rescue suits. We made four different trips and we were able to evacuate all the individuals who were trapped in their homes.”

Sebold said luckily, the individuals had parked their cars on a levee the night before and those were out of the flooded areas and safe. The water came up much faster than any of the people there would have expected, he said.

“I heard the people say multiple times they had never seen the water come up that fast through the years they had lived there,” he said. “We confirmed through the IDNR that all the people in the other homes were evacuated and the Jersey County Sheriff’s Department also confirmed that. We left the scene after about 3 hours in total to set up the rescue.”