

December 21, 2023

The Conejos County Messenger

HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly on April 1, July 1, Oct. 1, and Jan. 1



MERRY CHRISTMAS

Conejos County Sgt. Servando Moreno and Deputy Melinda Salazar Honored



At the Dec. 7, Board of County Commissioner's meeting, District Attorney Anne Kelley presented Deputy Melinda Salazar with a Certificate of Achievement for her role in the Alejandro Sandoval case. Deputy Sandoval excelled in the investigation and was able to sit with the victim and eventually convince her to come forward and testify. DA Kelley has promised and fulfilled those promises that victims are interviewed and heard to the fullest. The DA did mention she informed Sheriff Crowther of the deputies outstanding work and this gave the DA ample evidence to further prosecute the case.

Undersheriff Blake Crowther informed the BOCC and those in attendance of an incident that took place on Oct. 29. Sergeant Moreno was the first to respond to the trailhead where an out of state hunter had been reported to have a severe case of high altitude sickness. Sgt. Moreno did not hesitate for other first responders to arrive and began walking a two mile hike into the wilderness during a snowstorm to find the hunters. When Sgt. Moreno found the hunter, he was delirious and was actually walking the opposite direction of the trailhead without adequate clothing. Sgt. Moreno assessed the hunter's condition, he had the other hunters in the party get him the necessary layers of clothing he needed for the conditions and with the support of the hunters, they were able to support and escort the hunter back to the trailhead where an ambulance was waiting. Sgt. Moreno was presented with a Lifesaving Award for Heroic Actions by the Undersheriff and the Sheriff.



COMMISSIONER'S NEWS

At the December 7 Board of County Commissioners meeting, the Board adopted Resolution 2023-44, Allowing and Regulating the Use of Off-Highway Vehicles on Public Roads in Unincorporated Conejos County, Colorado.

The Commissioners made it clear in the motion to adopt the resolution is to review their decision in a year after meeting and gathering information from the Conejos County Sheriff's Department.

The process to make a final action on whether to adopt or not adopt the resolution lasted an approximate year and a half. The initial citizen comment meeting was held on September 7, 2022 and the final official public hearing was on October 24, 2023.

As reported in the October 1, 2023 edition of the Conejos County Messenger, allowing the legal use of OHV's on county roads is for recreational purposes and does not affect agricultural uses as authorized by state law. Also, there are five incorporated municipalities in the county and this resolution is not in effect in those municipalities. Each municipality can adopt similar regulations or might have an ordinance in place as of the time of this writing. Those municipalities are Antonito, Manassa, La Jara, Romeo and Sanford.

For a full copy of the Resolution, please go to the county's website: conejoscounty.colorado.gov





Conejos County Department of Social Services

They can't.
You can.
Be their voice. Make the call.
1-844-CO-4-KIDS
1-844-268-5437



Happy Holidays to everyone from the Conejos County Department of Social Services!

Every year, we partner with local agencies such as Gift of Giving, Migrant Education Program, and this year our local Sheriff Office to assist families with Christmas gifts for their loved ones. We are thankful for their partnership.

Please stop by our office: we have resources that have been donated by our community partners. We currently have in stock: diapers, Covid Tests, and Narcan/Fentanyl Test Strips

Please feel free to connect with our office if you need help in sending out or completing your LEAP applications. We can assist you to ensure your application gets processed. LEAP applications are processed with Goodwill but our agency can you get them the information they need.

Do you have questions on your case or need an update but can't make it to the office? Connect w/ us virtually! We can conduct interviews, answers questions, and provide other services over the phone or through a virtual meeting. Contact Bryanna.Trujillo@state.co.us if you want to schedule a meeting.

Visit our website for up to date information pertaining to the many programs offered through DSS.

COME JOIN OUR TEAM!!! We are looking for a child welfare caseworker. Applications and information can be found on our website.



*Merry
Christmas*
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

*Merry Christmas 2023 & Happy New Year 2024!
from the Conejos County Treasurer's Office!*



Here's an update to begin the new year of 2024. Please be aware because of the passage of SB 23B-001 and our computer conversion to Tyler Technologies software, that tax notices will be delayed at least 3 weeks. We hope to be mailing them the 1st part of February. If you do not receive yours by the end of February, you are welcome to call us and we will verify the mailing address we have for you. First half tax payments are due by February 29, 2024 and 2nd half tax payments are due by June 15, 2024. Full payments are due by April 30, 2024. Your cancelled check will be your receipt unless you request a receipt and send us a self-addressed

stamped envelope with your payment. Please note you can either mail your payment to: PO Box 97, Conejos, CO 81129, or pay online at: conejoscounty.colorado.gov (Please note this is our new County Website Address!) or call our office to make a payment over the phone. Please be aware there is a small convenience fee for debit cards, credit cards and e-checks.

If you have specific questions regarding the Senior Property Tax Exemption please contact the County Assessor's Office at (719) 376-5585. For questions on the Disabled Veterans' Exemption or Disabled Veteran Surviving Spouse Exemption please contact the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs at (303) 914-5832.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact our office at (719) 376-5919 and we will be glad to help. Thank you.

Mack M. Crowther, Conejos County Treasurer/Public Trustee

Seasons Greetings from Conejos County Public Health Department!

We're excited to share with you some exciting updates and news from Conejos County Public Health. These last few months have brought on more change and excitement for our program. Public Health has added two new staff members, both registered nurses. Veronica Fringer joins us as our part-time nurse. Veronica is a native of Conejos County and she understands our community and its needs. Vivian Gallegos, also from Conejos County, joins us in a temporary part-time basis. Vivian is from Romeo and is the former Director of Costilla County Public Health. Vivian has graciously joined our team and is assisting in getting Veronica accustomed to Public Health Nursing. We welcome both of them!



Veronica Fringer, RN



Vivian Gallegos, RN

We encourage everyone to keep up to date on all of their vaccines. If you are not sure if you need a vaccine, we can review your record with you. Give us a call for a record review or immunization appointment! Our Personal Care Provider Program is also here to provide assistance to those who need a little extra help at home. Please call us today for more information on how to get you or a loved one enrolled in these services. Lastly, we have been busy serving the needs of our community. We have been busy providing items for free to the community. Public health provides free covid tests, condoms, fentanyl test strips and Narcan. Narcan is a potentially life saving method for opioid overdose. Please feel free to take Narcan when you see Public Health's display and please encourage others to take some- *it could save someone's life*. As always, please store Narcan where it is out of reach of children.



Pictured: Annarae Smith, Jessica Juarez, Jurice Montoya, Denise Jiron and Austin Chavez.

Please call Public Health when you have questions—We are always here to help!



SHERIFF GARTH CROWTHER

**14044 County Road G.5
Antonito, Colorado 81120**

With the Holiday season upon us, many people are making purchases online, or using a credit card through checkout lines in stores. As a result, "identity theft" will be on the rise and innocent citizens will be scammed out of hundreds of thousands of hard-earned dollars. Throughout the year identity theft will victimize over 14 million Americans, and can happen to anyone at any time.

No one is safe or exempt from identity theft but there are steps that can be taken to help protect yourself. It is important to realize that your information is only as safe as you make or keep it. With that in mind, always protect yourself and your personal information such as bank information, credit cards, driver's licenses, social security and PIN numbers or anything else with personal identifying information. Identity thieves' prey on the unsuspecting, using techniques such as Mail Theft, Dumpster Diving, Shoulder Surfing or simply stealing your purse or wallet.

Mail theft is just that, items are stolen from unsecured mail boxes. Sooner or later thieves will come across a piece of mail containing information that will allow access into private account information, insurance information, bank accounts and personal identity. Dumpster diving is much the same, such as sifting through one's un-shredded or unburned trash makes personal information available to a thief. Pay special attention to who is behind you in the checkout line while you are entering credit card or debit card PINs. Scammers will collect the information you are entering while peering over your shoulder, and soon it will be used to drain your account. One should carry only the necessary information and as little of it as possible in your purse or wallet. If it is stolen or lost, the least amount of information available to a thief the better off you will be. Never carry written PIN Numbers or Pass Words where they would be available if lost or stolen. If or when these numbers or information are lost or stolen it should be reported immediately to the authorities and the companies in charge of the documents for emergency measures.

Numerous scams are done by phone and computer. One should never give identifying or personal information over the phone, or respond to emails that are unfamiliar or phishing for information. Unless you know exactly who you are corresponding with, information should never be divulged in any way to anyone.

Identity thieves know that the Holiday Season is a prime time to take advantage of giving and generous people. Please be on guard through out this Christmas Season, and be aware of scams in your dealings whether you are doing business in person, on the phone or through the computer. For more information on scams and identity theft, please contact your local law enforcement office.

Sheriff Garth Crowther

CONEJOS COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Conejos County Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group

Objectives:

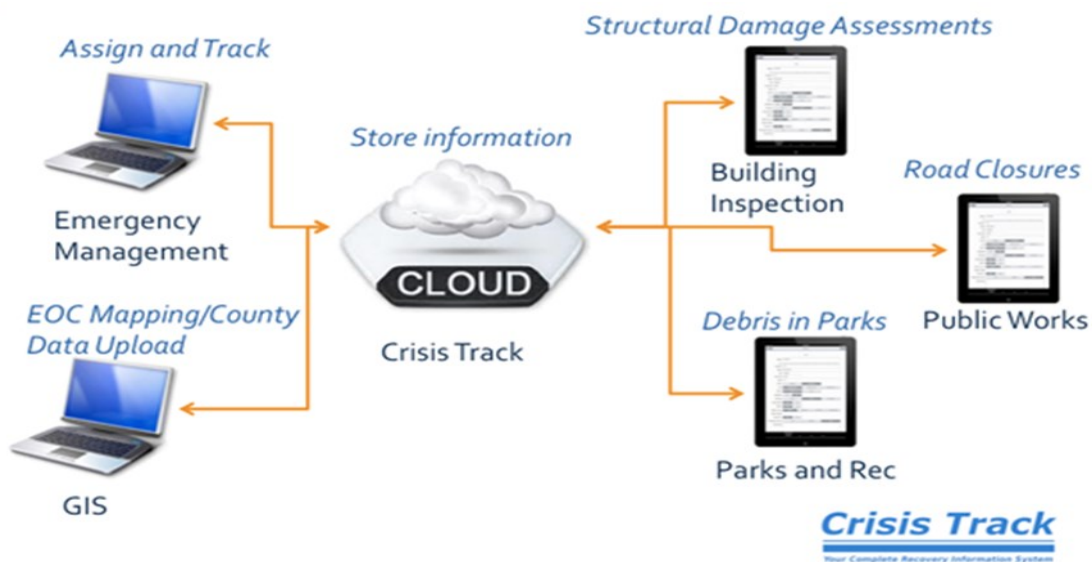
1. Identify the purpose and function of MAC groups and how they influence the Incident Management Team's (IMT's) workload and operations
2. Identify the purpose and function of Incident Support Organizations (ISOs) and how they influence the IMT's workload and operations
3. Identify the purpose and function of partners and how they influence the IMT's workload and operations

SLV Haz. Mat. Team presented a discussion to the group about their duties in the SLV.



Crisis Track

Crisis Track is a cloud-based disaster management application that allows county emergency personnel to conduct damage assessments, document emergency protective measures, and process FEMA grant applications to more quickly and more efficiently get recovery dollars into counties and communities. The Crisis Track system combines Software-as-a-Service applications with mobile applications to allow personnel to manage various assessment teams in real time.



CONEJOS COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (Continued)



Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) work to understand the hazards in the community, develop emergency plans in case of an accidental release or natural disaster, and look for ways to prevent accidents. The role of the SLV LEPC is to form a partnership between local governments and industries to enhance all-hazards preparedness. Local governments are responsible for hazard preparedness. Local governments are responsible for hazard planning and responses within their jurisdiction. This includes:

- Ensuring the local hazard analysis adequately addresses hazmat incidents;
- Incorporating planning for hazmat incidents into the local emergency management plans and annexes;
- Assessing capabilities and developing hazmat response capability using local resources, mutual aid and contractors;
- Training responders; and exercising the plan.

In addition to its formal duties, the LEPC serves as a focal point in the community for information and discussions about hazardous substance emergency planning, and health and environmental risks.



Happy Holidays from Conejos County Road and Bridge Department



The summer's most time consuming project was re-surfacing 3.6 miles of county roads. Our process includes a one inch asphalt leveling course, and then a top mat of approximate two inches of final asphalt. As time allows, our crew return to the resurfaced roads and begins shouldering both sides of the road with tons of road base. This give the transition an equal height when considering the much taller new asphalt to the bar pit, allowing residents to access their entries and those drivers that need to cross the county roads. In addition to resurfacing county roads, our crews were also able to help three municipalities in the county with their asphalt projects.

Another summer and fall project was repairing and in some cases, re-building roads that were damaged by snow melt flood waters in early Spring. These projects included hauling hundreds of tons of road base, and installation of new, larger culverts.

The Road and Bridge Department has replaced several bridges in our county and we are converting from the old standard of wood beam and plank bridges to either metal culverts or building concrete and steel bridges that can handle the water flow. These bridges are more expensive to build but will last a lifetime and will require a lot less maintenance.

Another late summer and fall project was filling potholes. Often one obstacle is the availability of hot mix. A very nice addition is the new pot hole patch truck purchased from the City of Golden. The truck carries up to 8 tons of material, keeps it hot and augers the hot mix into the prepared hole. It also has a roller compactor and a tack oil tank on board making the process more efficient in all aspects.

Another new process in road maintenance is crack sealing. Paved roads, over time, end up with cracks. These cracks allow water into the base creating soft spots or freezing and over time paved roads end up with potholes or larger cracks. We purchased a crack sealing machine and during the cold months we will be out sealing cracks and voids in an effort to make our asphalt last longer.

We recently experienced our first severe snow storm. Our crews were out before four o'clock am. The top priorities for clearing snow are bus routes, paved roads, and other high traffic roads. Snow removal can be challenging as the snow doesn't just fall everywhere at the same time and same amount; therefore, it is critical we have crew members checking the different areas of our county and reporting back the roads that become high priority. As we clear snow our equipment travels at a certain speed to cause the snow to clear the road and throw it into the bar pits. When you see our equipment coming, please use caution. During the last snow storm we had two vehicles slide off the road as they passed our road grader at a high rate of speed.

Please keep in mind that your access is your responsibility and we do not clear snow in private driveways.



SMALL FOOD RETAILER'S GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Small Food Retailers are the heart of the community, meeting the food needs of the neighborhood and often so much more! Corner stores and small grocers are sometimes the only places to buy staple foods for blocks (if not miles) and are run by hard-working small business owners who wear many hats to keep their doors open to their community.

A new Colorado program supports small food retailers and small family farms to bring more healthy foods into food deserts across Colorado. The program aims to increase access to or lower prices for healthy food in low-income and underserved areas of the state.

The Community Food Access program in the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) offers grant funding, tax credits, and a network of other small food business owners to address barriers retailers face in supplying low-income Coloradans with healthy foods. The San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition is working with CDA to spread the word about this program in our region.

The **2nd Round** of the grant program is opening soon. Your business (or businesses you know) can apply for up to \$50,000 for items like display shelving, cold storage, produce scales, and point-of-sales machines that will expand access to healthy food for Coloradans living on a low income. Farmers can apply for expenses like vehicles devoted to distributing food to retailers in low-income, low-access areas.

If you're interested in learning more, visit the [Community Food Access grant program website](#) Please reach out with any questions or for help applying to the grant program or becoming involved with the Consortium.

Lava Williams, SLV Local Food Coalition, 719-298-0330

