

## NAVIGATING THE WATER IN HIGH DESERT



*Sandoval County Fire and Rescue Inflatable Raft*

Living in the high desert does not dampen our love for water recreation. Now that the weather has warmed, people are taking to the rivers and the lakes, and the **Rio Grande Basin Heavy Technical Rescue Team (RGBHTRT)** is right there with them conducting weekend safety patrols on the Rio Grande River between Algodones in Sandoval County and Alameda in Bernalillo County. These patrols, in effect through mid-June, allow the RGBHTRT to promote river safety, train on the water, and provide a quick response for water rescues. *RGTRT* members include select firefighters with advanced training in water and mountain rescues. These first responders are from *Sandoval County Fire and Rescue, Rio Rancho Fire Department, and Corrales Fire Department.*

In preparation for the warmer weather, Sandoval County Fire & Rescue recently hosted a **Rescue Boat Operator** course for members of the Rio Grande Basin Heavy Technical Rescue Team and surrounding fire departments. Twenty-four firefighters from Sandoval County Fire & Rescue, Corrales Fire Department, Rio Rancho Fire & Rescue, Town of Bernalillo Fire Department, and Albuquerque Fire Department completed the two-day course that incorporated a classroom session and hands-on boat training on the water.

According to **SCFR Battalion Chief Adam Quinn**, this rescue boat operator certification expands firefighters' rescue and recovery skills on flat or moving water. It also fosters team building among all the fire departments. "RGBHTRT and other area firefighters work together in emergency situations, often with life-or-death outcomes. These training drills increase our technical skills, and practicing in a non-emergency environment enhances communication skills among team members. This benefits everyone when a real emergency presents itself."



*Air Boat, Corrales Fire Department*



*Sandoval County Fire and Rescue Canine, Mini ((certified in water scent), was on board with the training too.*

The RGBHTRT has several watercrafts that can be used on the stretch of river from the Algodones to Alameda including an Air Boat from Corrales Fire Department, two motorized Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIB) from Corrales Fire Department and Rio Rancho Fire & Rescue, and a recently added Inflatable Raft with paddles, oars & motor capabilities from Sandoval County Fire & Rescue. The crafts are deployed based on the type of emergency and water conditions. The RGBHTRT trains year-round for water and mountain rescues. This specialized team is engaged in rescue and recovery operations throughout Sandoval County. When needed, it also supports efforts outside of Sandoval County.