

South Dakota National Guard

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SD National Guard, RCFD train together for hazmat response

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota National Guard’s 82nd Civil Support Team trained alongside personnel from the Rapid City Fire Department for their annual hazardous materials training in Rapid City at Fire Station 4, April 28-29.

The joint training provides both organizations the opportunity to refresh skills and knowledge of hazardous materials, apply techniques and tools used to safely contain them, and share best practices when responding to hazmat incidences.

“We train with civilian agencies quite often, and our goal is to train with them almost every time we do a collective exercise, which can be about once a month or every other month,” said Capt. Jodi Mack, 82nd deputy commander. “All members of the 82nd CST are hazmat technician certified, and this training brings it down to the basics of what you need to know as a hazmat technician.”

“We go through a lot of the techniques that we don’t do every day and then catch up on anything that is new or coming out,” said Lt. Tammy Stadel with the RCFD. “It’s awesome for us! We don’t run very many hazmat calls annually, so this is a good refresher to train with the personnel who do this on a little bit more regular basis.”

The 82nd CST is an all-hazards response team capable of detecting chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) agents and substances. The team provides technical assessment, advice and assistance to civilian authorities and agencies when responding to emergencies and disasters involving CBRNE materials.

The training involved about two dozen CST members and firefighters from the RCFD’s Station 4 and 6, which includes personnel that specialize in decontamination and hazmat.

“The fire department is going to be the primary local response to anything that happens in the Rapid City area, and we specialize in some things that they don’t necessarily train in all the time,” said Staff Sgt. Drew Haffner, 82nd survey team chief. “We like to work with Stations 4 and 6, since they specialize in hazmat, and that is right in our wheelhouse.”

The training involved CST members and firefighters teaming up in small groups and rotating through a series of stations to work with simulators, substance sampling and site characteristics. The stations included several kits and simulators to address leaks with different types of cylinders: 150 pound, one ton, and railcar-type cylinders.

“We have simulators that we can go through and actually put the kits on what we would simulate in handling a leak situation,” said Stadel. “We are also using a Betts valve to mitigate a leak, so we can offload on a tanker truck that’s tipped over, and that would be for some type of flammable gas or liquid.

“We are also doing sampling and site characteristic, where we are looking at what kind of chemicals or solutions there may be, so we can get a sample to take back to the science personnel or try to identify it in the field,” Stadel continued.

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The training also involves the teams wearing their hazmat protective suits with a self-contained breathing apparatus. Haffner, who served as a RCFD firefighter for five years before joining the CST, says training together like this enhances communication between the teams.

“Iron sharpens iron, everybody coming together and working together is extremely important...that way if we were to get called onto a scene, they know how we work and we know how they work” he said.

Another advantage of the training is to strengthen relationships and coordination between both organizations.

“These types of training events are so essential to our team, because it builds relationships with our local first responders,” said Mack. “When we respond, we’re a support role to them, so it’s important we get to know each other and know our capabilities – because the faster we can respond and sync together, the more effective we are.”

“It builds a lot of the relationships we need, so when we do arrive on a big scene we know what the CST expects and what they need from us prior to arrival to help the whole scene go a little bit better,” added Stadel.

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210429-Z-TL287-0001: U.S. Army Capt. Russ Reed checks the protective equipment of Staff Sgt. Jerico Witte as members of the South Dakota National Guard’s 82nd Civil Support Team and the Rapid City Fire Department conduct their annual hazardous material training in Rapid City, S.D., April 29, 2021. The joint training provides an opportunity to refresh skills, employ techniques and tools, and share best practices when responding to hazmat incidences. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



210429-Z-TL287-0002: Members of the South Dakota National Guard’s 82nd Civil Support Team and the Rapid City Fire Department use a Betts valve on tanker simulator during their annual hazardous material training in Rapid City, S.D., April 29, 2021. The joint training provides an opportunity to refresh skills, employ techniques and tools, and share best practices when responding to hazmat incidences. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



210429-Z-TL287-0003: Members of the South Dakota National Guard’s 82nd Civil Support Team and the Rapid City Fire Department train on a cylinder simulator during their annual hazardous material training in Rapid City, S.D., April 29, 2021. The joint training provides an opportunity to refresh skills, employ techniques and tools, and share best practices when responding to hazmat incidences. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



210429-Z-TL287-0004: Dana Mellegard discusses site characteristics and electrical grounding to prevent static electricity with members of the South Dakota National Guard’s 82nd Civil Support Team and the Rapid City Fire Department during their annual hazardous material training in Rapid City, S.D., April 29, 2021. The joint training provides an opportunity to refresh skills, employ techniques and tools, and share best practices when responding to hazmat incidences. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



210429-Z-TL287-0005: Members of the South Dakota National Guard's 82nd Civil Support Team and the Rapid City Fire Department conduct substance sampling and identification during their annual hazardous material training in Rapid City, S.D., April 29, 2021. The joint training provides an opportunity to refresh skills, employ techniques and tools, and share best practices when responding to hazmat incidences. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)



210429-Z-TL287-0006: Lt. Tammy Stadel with the Rapid City Fire Department and members of the South Dakota National Guard's 82nd Civil Support Team discuss mitigating cylinder leaks during their annual hazardous material training in Rapid City, S.D., April 29, 2021. The joint training provides an opportunity to refresh skills, employ techniques and tools, and share best practices when responding to hazmat incidences. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss)