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Kermit firefighters recognized for work during June flooding

By Bruce Justice News Editor

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During a special ceremony conducted Tuesday evening, four members of Kermit Volunteer Fire Department's swift-water rescue team were recognized for their lifesaving work in Rainelle in Greebrier County during June's major flooding event. Pictured, from left, are KVFD Chief Tommy Preece and team members Timmy Dale Preece, Jeff Kirk, Wayne Williamson and Lee Murphy.

Mingo Messenger photo by Bruce Justice

When four members of the Kermit Volunteer Fire Department's swift-water team were asked to drop everything they were doing on that memorable late June 23 afternoon and gear up for a rescue mission

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With the heavy downpour taking place at that same time in their own town and region, each of them was very much cognizant of the fact that they might be leaving in the midst of a local disaster.

But the team also knew severe flooding was already taking place in Greenbrier County and already trapping dozens of people in their homes and businesses.

They further understood rescuing these people was going to require every available resource within driving distance of Rainelle that officials in that region of West Virginia could scrape together.

So in spite of the real threat the heavy rains were posing to their own family and neighbors, the four-member team of Assistant Chief Timmy Dale Preece and Captains Lee Murphy, Jeff Kirk, and Wayne Williamson, with their two jet-powered aluminum boats in tow, began the three-hour trek to Greenbrier County.

When the team finally got their boats in the water at around 1 a. m. the next morning, over the next several hours they would successfully extract and safely deliver 25 of the 43 trapped residents in the immediate Rainelle area.

During a special ceremony held at KVFD's weekly meeting Tuesday evening, and with a majority of the department's members present, the four men were recognized with a plaque for their meritorious efforts during what many state officials dubbed as the most serious flooding in West Virginia in 100 years.

"I just want to let you guys know that not only am I proud of how you handled yourselves and what you were able to accomplish in Greenbrier County, but your town and community are proud of you also," KVFD Chief Tommy "Tomahawk" Preece said as he presented the plaque.



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“You guys left, not knowing what might happen here in Mingo County after you were on your way, and you went and did the job you were trained for and asked to do anyway. You not only did that job, but you did it exceptionally well.

“The emergency management director in Greenbrier County couldn’t say enough about what you were able to do. So this is just a small way to let you to know how much we all appreciate you.”

The department’s swift-water team is the only one in Mingo County. It is comprised of 12 divers, all of whom are certified in swift-water rescue, as well as six other members who are certified in swift-water rescue only.

The KVFD currently has 45 firefighters on its roster who together operate three stations, two in Mingo County and one in Wayne County. The KVFD also provides mutual aid to Warfield in Martin County, Kentucky.

