

Equine Rescue Techniques (ERT)

TRAIL RIDERS OF DUPAGE



Equine Rescue Techniques® (ERT) is an emergency horse handling and trailer education course presented by Trail Riders of DuPage (TROD) for first responders, typically police and fire departments. Since 1994, TROD has trained more than 1,500 emergency personnel in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

ORIGINS

ERT began in response to a highway accident with a horse trailer. The horse had its legs stuck inside the side windows of the trailer. The fire fighters on the scene planned to use a large wrecker to upright the trailer and then remove the horse. The rescuers did not want to injure the animal, but they simply did not know what else to do.

Created in 1994, the ERT course primarily focuses on emergencies with loaded trailers in traffic accidents, and fire incidents. Originally only taught in DuPage and neighboring counties, it is now available to emergency personnel — police and fire departments — across the state, thanks to a generous grant from the Illinois Equine Promotions Board.

ERT IN ACTION

In October 2007, a double-decker trailer loaded with 59 draft horses overturned in Wadsworth, Illinois. Prior to the accident, TROD presented the ERT course at Sunflower Farms in Bristol, Wisconsin, less than ten miles from the scene of the accident.

Many of the first responders on the scene in Wadsworth had attended the ERT training, and were able to draw on that knowledge to safely extricate 41 of the 59 horses from the wreckage.

HANDS-ON WORK WITH HORSES

During the first half of the class, one or two students team up with a horse and a handler. Students learn to safely handle their equine partner, halter and lead, improvise halters using everyday items, and navigate obstacles.

Typical horse behaviors, both relaxed and under stress, are explained and demonstrated. The second pass through the obstacle course is more challenging and gives the students a feel for the horse's quickness and strength when stressed, startled or panicked, in a safe, controlled environment.

HORSE TRAILERS

The second half of the class focuses on horse trailers. Students are given a chance to inspect a variety of trailer types, from the smaller two-horse bumper pulls and goosenecks to long-distance semi-tractor rigs.

Key discussion points include trailer construction, how to approach and investigate the trailer, and what to do and not to do until the large animal vet arrives.

BARN FIRES AND STABLE ASSESSMENT

This course offers first responders the opportunity to visit a local equine business to gain a better understanding of the structure and physical layout, as well as its contents and inhabitants.

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Key discussion points include building construction, fuel load, water sources, and much more.

RESOURCES

Each participating department receives a resource guide for their dispatch desk which covers:

- 1) the course material;
- 2) lists of large animal veterinarians and emergency stables by location; and
- 3) emergency haulers.

The course has received wide acceptance from police, fire and animal rescue communities. The Equine Rescue Techniques course is being taught across the country by other organizations (initially trained by TROD) that recognize its benefit.

SCHEDULING A TRAINING

A typical ERT training has up to 14-16 participants, to ensure each student has the opportunity to interact fully with their training horse. It is a four-hour class, which includes classroom instruction, horse handling and trailer inspection. A certificate of completion is issued after the final exam is completed. Morning and afternoon sessions are frequently conducted to allow full department participation while ensuring adequate shift coverage. Classes are conducted March through November, weather permitting. There is no charge to your department for this training, thanks to TROD's all-volunteer team of instructors and horse handlers.

Please email vickiweyer@icloud.com or call 630.400.1556 to discuss the specific needs of your department.

EQUINES IN THE COMMUNITY

But, really, how many horses can there be in Illinois?

- Illinois is home to approximately 150,367 horses, mules and donkeys, valued at over \$300 million.
- The Illinois equine industry produces goods and services valued at over \$2 billion, and contributes over \$3.5 billion to the Gross Domestic Product of the United States.
- Over 30% of Illinois households (1.6 million residents) contain horse enthusiasts.
- Over 24,000 miles of riding trails in Illinois and over 645,000 acres of Illinois land are used for horse-related purposes = horse trailers on the road 365 days a year.
- More than 69,000 Illinoisans are involved in the equine industry as horse owners, service providers, employees and volunteers.
- Over 2.6 million spectators attend Illinois' two racetracks and more than 100 days of County Fair and State Fair racing for Standardbreds, Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horses.
- The Illinois horse industry directly provides 19,771 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs. Spending by suppliers and employees (in Illinois and other states) generates additional jobs in Illinois for a total employment impact of 25,594 FTE jobs.

These figures do not reflect how many of the 9.2 million horses in the United States travel the highways and country roads of Illinois on their way to races, horse shows, training, breeding farms and, of course, that special new home.

(Horseman's Council of Illinois 2012, American Horse Council National Survey 2017)

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