



TOWN OF CANTON VOLUNTEER Fire & EMS Department

Valuing Life...at a Moment's Notice



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Distribution

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Surf & Turf Served up by Canton's Volunteer Firefighters *Emergency Drills on Water & Land Test Skills & Readiness*

Canton, CT July, 2009.... With residents and visitors flocking to enjoy Canton's waterways and trails, summer is a time of heightened vigilance for the Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department.

"In response to the significant increase in the number of people on the water and many younger, less experienced drivers on the roads," states 2nd Deputy Chief of Training Craig Robbins, "we recently participated in several 'live' rescue scenarios to test and challenge our volunteers' technical, planning and communication skills on both land and water."

SCENARIO 1: It's 7:30 p.m. on a Monday night. Rain is beginning to fall. The river is high and moving fast. A walker on the trail calls 911 after finding an upturned canoe by the river - with three life vests nearby, but no occupants. RESPONSE: 15 firefighters/EMTs, Engine 4, ATV 1, Utility-8, Ladder 2, Car 10 the ambulance.

Volunteer firefighters/ EMTs grab rescue helmets, life vests, binoculars, life safety rope, throw bags, pike poles and medical supplies to prepare for the rescue. Meanwhile, Marine 1, the Departments boat, begins patrolling the river. "With water rescues, you never know if you're going to have to *Reach* out, *Throw* to, *Row* to or *Go* (swim) to rescue a victim. So you have to come prepared for it all," says Robbins.

Drill Commander, Captain Justin Kingston dispatches two teams to search both sides of the riverbank covering different vantage points. Moving upstream, the teams determine the dynamics, obstacles and hazards of the river and surmise the likely places where the victims could have run into trouble. They look for clues and possible witnesses.

Fifteen minutes into the search, Collinsville Fire Engineer Tom Gotaski and veteran firefighter/EMT Willi Matava spot the first victim, (played by 13 year old Jordan Gotaski), on a large rock near shore. He is in shock, has deep lacerations on his legs and is complaining of neck pain. Matava radios his location. Rescuers descend on the scene.

As volunteer firefighters Jon Szylobyrt and Myles Angell reach the victim, they spot a body across the river on a small island. They radio Kingston for assistance. Marine 1, driven by Captain Steve LaPointe, is dispatched to rescue the second victim, (aka Captain Tucker Herbold), who is hypothermic, semi-unconscious and has an injury to his back.

Firefighters verify that there were only two, not three occupants of the canoe, despite initial clues to the contrary. Both victims are placed on back boards and 'packaged' for transport to the ambulance. While Herbold is brought to shore on Marine 1, young Gotaski is brought up a densely wooded, steep and slippery hill by volunteer firefighters/EMTs aided by a safety rope line hoisted by volunteer firefighters Matt Bilts and Joe Ouimette on top of the hill.



SCENARIO 2: It's 7:30 p.m. on a clear, cool Monday night. A car full of young people and another with two adults and a child have crashed into each other off Route 179. There is extensive damage to the front end of one car and the driver side of the other. RESPONSE: 14 firefighters/EMTs, Rescue 9, Engine 4, Utility 8, Car 10 the ambulance. NOTE: No `victims' were used in this scenario.

Unable to gain access to passengers by opening any of the crushed doors on either car, volunteer firefighters begin planning how to disassemble the vehicles.

Already familiar with the basics of scene safety and vehicle anatomy, volunteer firefighters stabilize the vehicles with cribbing in the front and back of the car; saw through windshields; and break open windows in an effort to allow EMTs access to entrapped passengers. Maintaining ongoing communication with EMTs, firefighters continue to work on extrication.

Extrication efforts are ramped up when firefighters introduce the Department's powerful hydraulic, Holmatro rescue tool into the equation. Once inserted into the metal body of the cars, this tool is able to do the heavy labor of cutting through the vertical posts that support the roof in order to remove it; spreading and pulling apart the doors of the cars to gain entry; and/or ramming then rolling the dashboard forward to free passengers.

"During real motor vehicle accidents," explains Chief Richard Hutchings, "we only cut and spread and ram as much as we need to in order to rescue trapped passengers. The value of this drill is in knowing how to come at the vehicle from any angle or any place on the body."

The Department is grateful to both Riverside Nursery of Canton for the use of their property during the water rescue drill and Stewart's Used Auto Parts of Barkhamsted for the donation of two vehicles for use in the extrication drill.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Town of Canton Volunteer Fire & EMS Department can visit www.cantonfireandems.org, or drop by the Collinsville, North Canton or Canton firehouses any Monday evening during The Department's weekly practice drill at 7:30 p.m.

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