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TRAINING PAYS OFF IN CONFINED SPACE RESCUE JULY 27

Fire Department rope rescue training pays off just days after exercise completed

MUSCATINE, Iowa – Training is an important part of every job. To do something well, you have to stay up to date with new techniques and new procedures. Training is even more important for those who we entrust with our safety and well-being. For members of the Muscatine Fire Department, the training for real life situations is often, unfortunately, followed by practical use of that training.

Last Thursday (July 27) was a prime example.

Fire Lt. Joe Timmsen had just completed a class on rope rescue and confined space rescue at Station 1 on Tuesday.

At 3:51 p.m. Thursday, a call from The Raymond Corporation, 3305 IA-38, Muscatine, was received for an individual who fell into a pit.

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“The initial call came in as someone fell into a pit or a confined space up to 20 feet deep,” Acting Battalion Chief Harold Bennitt said. “You think of different scenarios while you are going to the scene but you never know what you have until you get there.”

Timmsen was at Station 2 which is home for the HAZMAT truck, where he had just finished conducting an inventory of the ropes and making a list of items they would need to replace.

“I had literally just tossed the last bag of ropes back onto the HAZMAT truck when the call came in,” Timmsen said

He acknowledged that his thoughts while rolling to the scene were not about what they would encounter but just simply “we are going to nail this”.

The hot July weather had prevented the Muscatine Fire Department from staging a confined space rescue training exercise but that did not keep the department from training.

“Training is important and we try to train on different situations every day,” Fire Chief Jerry Ewers said. “You never know what the next call will be. We have to be ready and be able to pull that information from our heads for any situation we are encountering.”

Timmsen had just returned from vacation when the weather became cooler. He had been able to use a slide show presentation to go over some of the confined space rescue techniques but was not able to break out some of the equipment.

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“With the cooler weather we were able to combine a class on rope rescues with a class on confined space rescues, breaking down the components and going over each one,” Timmsen said.

That training came into play the very next day.

“When you are rolling on a call, you can control what you do,” Timmsen said. “But you are also at the mercy of everything around you. You have people around you that have to be at a certain skill level. You always have a few who are at a higher level and a few who are a bit lower. Sometimes you are thinking okay I have this guy or that guy but not this time. I just knew that we were going to nail this one.”

Timmsen recalls arriving at the scene, looking down into the pit, and thinking that they could just hook up a quick 2-to-1 and really didn’t need the pre-rigged kit that was on the HAZMAT truck.

“Then somebody said ‘Hey, what about a z-rig’,” Timmsen said. “I said that sounded great and to go get it. They replied they didn’t have to because they already had it hooked up and was ready to go.”

Being able to identify what you need on scene and have the major stuff ready is what the training is all about. Each rescue is different and each rescue has to be evaluated on the needs and the risks to the victim and the rescuers.

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“Once you starting doing things like a high angle rescue, you get into hours preparing for the rescue,” Timmsen said. “You go at a snail’s pace to make sure that you are not making the rescuers additional victims. The training also helps you assess the situation.”

The rescue at Raymond went very well.

“It was not really that complicated but we could have made it much more complicated if were not prepared,” Bennitt said.

“I am very proud of these guys,” Timmsen said. “They knew what they needed to get right away and they were thinking out of the box.”

The fire department will keep on training, whether in HAZMAT, rescue or EMS, to be better prepared for any situation that they are called for.

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