



Table Top Training Drills

Table Top Training Exercise-July 2012

Trench Rescue

The fire and emergency service is known for its first responders arriving on scene with good intentions and ready to leap into action in almost every situation. Sometimes members may not have been trained to what is presented before them. One of these circumstances is a trench rescue. The technical aspects of a trench rescue are numerous and are described as high risk and low frequency. The risk management of this operation requires highly trained members to be called in, specifically a trained Technical Rescue Team.

Near-Miss report [09-567](#) is a perfect example of first responders with good intentions and limited training ready to jump into action.

Event Description

I [deputy chief] responded to a trench rescue call. There were two persons trapped with their heads showing in an eight foot deep trench. Ground conditions were extremely muddy with water in the trench. A track hoe was straddling the trench near the rescue area. Would-be rescuers were in the trench upon arrival. ICS was good. The decision was made to send firefighters into the trench with inadequate shoring or proper procedures. No one on the scene was trained in trench rescue and the danger was not known or recognized. The victims were rescued alive after two to three hours. The trench had a total collapse in the rescue area hours later. Fire fighters would have been engulfed in wet soil above their heads. Only the timing saved them from injury or death.

Lesson Learned

Do not try to handle emergencies without the proper training and equipment. Wait on a trained team, regardless of public perception or criticism. Educate all members of the department to the awareness level in technical rescue so they will recognize the need to call for specialty teams.

Checklist

The International Association of Fire Chiefs' Safety, Health and Survival Section has put together a [Fire Officer Field Guide](#) that is available for download at the iTunes App Store. The checklist below is developed to aid the first arriving unit to begin safe operations until a chief officer and/or safety officer arrives on scene. Consider this checklist to augment your department's SOP/SOG for first arriving units at a trench rescue emergency.

1. Stage apparatus 500' away.
2. Turn off heavy equipment in the vicinity of the trench.
3. Stop all traffic and trains in the immediate area.

4. Establish a perimeter and keep everyone out.
5. Control panicked workers, call police for assistance.
6. Stay out of trench unless properly trained.
7. Call Trench Rescue Team.
8. Determine shoring and expertise needed.
9. Consider using contractor assistance if deemed reliable.
10. Find out how long the victim has been trapped.
11. Who the “competent person” is on scene.
12. Depth of the trench upon collapse.
13. Width of the trench and any equipment inside with the victim.
14. Approximate victim location.
15. Soil type and if shoring was being used.