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Contact:
Erik Endress
201-320-3216
eendress@ramseyrescue.com
www.ramseyrescue.com

Ramsey Rescue Squad invests in member safety with state of the art Personal Protective Equipment

Ramsey, NJ August 20, 2005 — Ramsey's volunteer Rescue Squad has taken a major step forward in ensuring the safety of its members at emergency scenes. The Squad recently purchased a new personal protective system that enables on scene accountability and two-way emergency alert functionality, letting on scene personnel know of emergency conditions, such as the need to evacuate a building.

"Four years after September 11th, many emergency service organizations nationwide have done little to improve their ability to alert rescuers of serious conditions that can place them in danger." Says Michael Burns, Ramsey Rescue's Chief "On 9/11, many rescuers weren't able to receive evacuation orders as the incident commanders realized the buildings were in danger of collapsing. That can happen here in Ramsey at a fire scene, a building collapse or other situations we respond to."

Most firefighters and rescue personnel nationwide use a simple plastic tag for on scene accountability. In Ramsey, firefighters and rescue squad personnel carry three tags each. The first tag stays on their gear, the second tag stays on the truck they rode on, and the third tag is given to the sector officer in the area where they will be operating. But the current system has no ability to warn personnel or danger or alert incident commanders of emergencies, it is just a piece of plastic with a name on it.

In May of 2005, Ramsey Rescue participated in a large-scale terrorism drill held at the Ramsey Route 17 Train Station. A number of issues arose from that experience including the need to improve the capability of the Incident Commander to monitor and alert rescuers to evacuate immediately.

As a direct result of the drill, the Squad re-submitted its Capital Budget to the Borough Council Finance Committee, asking for \$20,000 to purchase the equipment needed to better protect its members at major emergencies.

In the end of September, the Squad learned that the Borough Finance Committee declined their request and, in fact, cut the Squad's Capital Budget from \$45,000 to \$25,000.

"We were pretty disappointed to have to find that out that not only was our budget cut from years past, but that the new system wasn't going to be funded." Endress said.

While disappointed, the Squad puts a very high importance on the safety of its members and as a result the Squad membership voted to invest nearly \$20,000 of money the organization has raised through annual fund raising efforts to purchase the Grace Industries T-PASS 3 Evacuate system. This investment, the largest single purchase in the Squad's history, will greatly enhance the organization's ability to provide on-scene accountability. The system was placed into service last week.

The T-PASS 3 Evacuate system gives Rescue Officers control over the safety of rescue squad personnel operating on the emergency incident scene. User-friendly controls allow the T-PASS 3 Evacuate to work independent of voice radios that can sometimes fail or be besieged with voice traffic.

In the sudden event of a flashover, a collapse situation, or other imminent danger, the system will immediately identify, by name, any rescue personnel whose T-PASS is in alarm, allowing the commander to send help immediately.

The Rescue Commander can also transmit an evacuation signal to rescuers in a building or on a scene. They can choose to evacuate individual rescuers, groups of rescuers, or send an evacuation alert to every operational rescuer on the scene with no worries about excessive voice radio traffic.

"This system represents the single most important purchase we can make." Says Endress "The safety of our members is the first priority for our organization and we have an obligation to equip them as best we can."

Rescue Squad Chief Michael Burns agreed. "The ability to respond rapidly to a rescuer's call for help can mean the difference between life and death. Additionally, the ability to immediately transmit an evacuation signal to personnel in danger, gives our members the best chance to "get out alive" when the conditions are deteriorating."

Ramsey Rescue becomes one of a handful of Bergen County emergency agencies with this sophisticated level of personnel protective equipment and the first in Northwest Bergen County. However, the system is interoperable with other departments, meaning that if other local fire or rescue agencies was to purchase the same system, the two agencies could see and monitor each other's personnel, providing a higher level of accountability.

"I think that over the next year or so, I think you're going to see more and more organizations switching over to this level of protection for their personnel." Says Endress "Is it expensive? Yes. But it's not more expensive than one of our members being killed. You look at what happened on 9/11 and what happens to firefighters across the country in situations where a building collapses or a flashover occurs or they have a heart attack, the use of this equipment will reduce the loss of life dramatically. That's why we bought it and we thank the residents and business owners of Ramsey for the generous support that allows us to purchase equipment like this. They never let us down."

The Squad will launch its 2006 Capital Campaign at the end of October. The Squad uses the donated funds to purchase equipment, provide training for members and cover operating expenses related to the organization.

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