

Training Across the Country



By Pete Methner

Periodically, I'm fortunate enough to get the opportunity to visit and train with other fire departments in auto extrication techniques. Often, I do this on behalf of Code 4 Fire and Rescue in Mississauga, Ontario.

Recently, such an opportunity took me to Halifax, Nova Scotia where I was able to meet and train with both the Elmsdale Fire Department, and several firefighters from the neighbouring Ennfield Fire Department, each located about 20 minutes from the Halifax airport.

The reason for my visit was to review the impact of developing technologies in newer vehicle construction on auto extrication maneuvers, so that they could be better prepared for future rescue operations.

After the greetings and introductions, in the warm, wel-

coming spirit of Atlantic Canada hospitality, our first task was an overview of the rescue equipment currently on their Heavy Rescue and Pumper units. Given what I know about how difficult it can sometimes be for volunteers to raise funds for their departments, I was very impressed with their arsenal of tools. Here's the list.

Elmsdale Fire Heavy Rescue:

1. Honda Simo Power Unit
2. 1985 vintage single pump power unit
3. 32 B Spreader
4. Roadrunner
5. 0 to 150-inch Cutter
6. 3 different Rams
7. 2 manifold blocks
8. Hose reel
9. Set of 3 airbags

Elmsdale Fire Pumper:

1. 32 Spreader
2. ML 50 Cutter

The hydraulic tools were Hurst Rescue Tools, combined with a generous assortment of hand tools to complete the complement.

There are a number of full-time departments that would like to equip their apparatus with the amount of tools available to this volunteer department. Given that these rescue teams are responsible for response coverage of part of a major highway, I'm confident that they are well equipped for almost any extrication rescue situation they may encounter.

The first session, Friday night, was strictly in-class briefing, including an overview of the tools, the intended maneuvers, and the safety protocols. Saturday morning began the full day hands-on training. Nova Scotia has to be one of my favorite places to travel for rescue training. I always get tons (no pun intended) of vehicles to cut up, and they're always conscientious about representing a wide variety of makes across a range of model years.

On Saturday morning, we began with a hands-on review of the tools that we would be using over the course of the day. This is an important part of working with rescue equipment in that it allows for questions about tools that may not have been used in some time. We often look at the tools on the truck - mostly when we're checking the compartments - and often we feel that have a good idea of how those tools work. But many firefighters don't get a chance to use their rescue tools often enough to become intuitive or 'natural'

with them. When it then comes time to make a quick decision in an emergency scenario, we may be reluctant to choose the most effective tool, instead shying away from it because we're uncertain. That can have consequences for the team(s), and for the victim(s). Combine this with the fact that safety is always our first priority, and it's always better to first take the time, look over the tools, and ask questions.



Staging tools at an MVC helps to speed-up the rescue operation. Laying tools out in a particular, sequential order helps us to quickly find the one we're looking for when it's needed.

Once we took the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the tools, we then focused our attention on the different strengths and weaknesses present in the wide range of vehicles on the road today. Among many other features, we looked at the different types of windshields and glass, and put a special emphasis on side-impact airbag protection, and how to recognize airbag locations from the outside.



The MINI Cooper offers a rigid body and state of the art crash absorption design.

We also talked about the accident scene from a command perspective, including how we should be deploying rescuers as they arrive at the scene. From staging vehicles to setting a tool staging area, we had everyone working to make the team come together in ways that would allow us to expand our on-scene resources.

To make things even more interesting, we even had one firefighter who brought his personal Kubota to flip, move, and even crush the vehicles while we were setting up our next scenario.

This team really wanted to learn, which meant that we were able to encourage different ideas about vehicle stabilization, and its importance to both the patient and the rescuer. Once we removed any part of the vehicles we worked on, we immediately checked our stabilization to assure its purpose and effectiveness.

Once completing our initial tasks, we then began working with the available hand tools in order to become more familiar with them. With patient care as the ultimate consideration, we were especially careful with our glass management and with gaining access to the vehicle.

Depending upon the position of the vehicle, we stabilized it before sending any rescuers inside to tend to the patient. Periodically, we would use live

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| Brampton: Chief Verrall Clark | Mississauga: Chief Garry Morden |
| Caledon: Chief Boyd Finger | St. Catharines: Chief Al Jones |
| Vaughan: Chief John Sutton | |



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Tuesday, March 18, 2003
Name: Pat Bourguignon
City: Schreiber, Ontario

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