



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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East Pierce Technical Rescue Team Prepares for the Predictable

Bonney Lake, WA— You're having a really bad day when you see this team. The East Pierce Fire and Rescue firefighters who belong to the Technical Rescue Team respond to extraordinary or highly dangerous rescue situations such as building collapses, confined-space entrapments, wilderness and high-angle rescues. On Tuesday, they participated in a drill that simulated a parking garage collapse following an earthquake. They practiced the complex skills necessary to identify potential risks, stabilize concrete slabs and cut and move debris to reach a patient trapped in a vehicle.

The Technical Rescue Team is one of four special operations teams at East Pierce Fire and Rescue. The others include the Wildland Team, HazMat Team and Water Rescue Team. Selected career firefighters are given the opportunity to participate in one of these special operations teams.

There are 18 members of the Technical Rescue Team. Many are assigned to the East Pierce fire station in Sumner, which serves as the Technical Rescue station, although team members are also strategically placed throughout the 153-square-mile fire district in order to respond quickly to any situation.

All Technical Rescue Team members must start with certification in five types of complex and dangerous rescues, including rope, trench, confined space, structural collapse and heavy machinery/vehicle rescues. "Firefighters must complete more than 200 hours of training to join the team," says East Pierce Captain and Tech Rescue Team member Kevin Stabenfeldt.

Special Operations Team members attend many hours of training in addition to the firefighting and emergency medical training they receive as firefighters, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics. Technical Rescue Team members attend nearly 100 hours per year of additional training, plus they must complete company-level training while they are on shift. They also help teach an annual refresher course in Technical Rescue skills that all East Pierce firefighters must attend. "This gives our firefighters who aren't on the team basic skills to in order to call for appropriate resources and complete initial actions on the scene of these types of rescues," says Stabenfeldt.

The East Pierce Team also trains as a member of the Pierce County Special Operations Rescue Team (PCSORT), an association of several Pierce county fire districts that share the cost of purchasing specialized equipment and provide extra personnel for more complicated rescues. The members of PCSORT include Gig Harbor Fire and Medic One, West Pierce Fire and Rescue, Central Pierce Fire and Rescue and East Pierce Fire and Rescue. Together they form a regional response throughout Pierce County.

Currently, the Technical Rescue Team is expanding training for rescues involving heavy machinery and large vehicles. "We deal with vehicle rescues and extrications on a regular basis, but it's the passenger vehicle that's become wedged under a semi, or a concrete truck that tipped over onto a car, or the industrial worker who get a hand caught in machinery that we will focus on," Stabenfeldt says. "These are not every day calls, but we have to be prepared for the predictable."

The Technical Rescue Team thanks Jim Wolf and Evergreen Precast in Sumner; and John Marticio and Old Castle Precast in Auburn for the donation of the concrete used by the team during the drill.

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Photo: 2017 Tech Rescue Drill14.jpg

Caption: The East Pierce Fire and Rescue firefighters who belong to the Technical Rescue Team spend nearly 100 hours per year training for difficult and complicated rescues.