

# Uncovering Unexpected Training Resources



## Turning to your community can pay off when planning training drills

By Marie Nordberg, Associate Editor

It's been months since your department has put on a training exercise, and you know you'll have to do something about it soon. Part of the problem is that you're fresh out of ideas for where to drill and how to create a scenario that you haven't done dozens of times already. Maybe it's time to take another look around your own community to see if there are resources you've overlooked. Sometimes, those resources come from the most unexpected places.

In early May, the Huntington (NY) Fire Department and several surrounding fire departments, ambulance corps and first responders held a multi-departmental rescue training exercise hosted by Gershow Recycling at its Huntington Station facility. Gershow provided a bus and other vehicles, and prepared the accident scene for the rescuers.

Approximately 150 first responders, Suffolk County Police Aviation Unit and Huntington Hospital all participated in the drill.

"This was an effort undertaken by Gershow to meet a need we'd heard about from the Huntington Fire Department," says Gershow's community liaison, Steven Rossetti. "Once we got the proper connections to go forward, everything seemed to fall into place. In this drill, we donated access to late-model junked cars and a Metropolitan Transit bus to create a mock rescue from the mass transit vehicle. Instead of having to move the bus to and from a site, we did the drill on the grounds of our facility, and, after the exercise ended, the vehicles were shredded and recycled."

In late May, Gershow Recycling continued its generosity by donating 30 vehicles for the Third Annual Chuck Varese Vehicle Extrication Tournament at the Northport Fire



**Responders hold a multi-departmental rescue training exercise hosted by Gershow Recycling at its Huntington Station facility.**



Department's training grounds. Twenty-five teams from 15 fire departments in the Town of Huntington, as well as departments from several surrounding communities competed in the event. As with the earlier training drill, the vehicles were shredded and recycled at Gerhow's facility. Proceeds from the tournament went to benefit the Suffolk County Burn Center.



It helps when community businesses understand the value of their local first responders, says Rossetti. "Once they realize what is given to us through their volunteer service, it's almost a no-brainer for companies to want to help and be involved. In today's environment, we never know what's going to pop up, so training for all types of situations is very helpful. I would encourage departments across the country to reach out to their local scrap metal, recycling or processing units, who might have vehicles available for them to train."

Norm Rooker, EMT-P, chief of Ouray County EMS in Ouray, CO, knows first-hand how important those local connections can be. In early May, his department completed its second successful school bus MCI drill, a process that took seven months of planning and coordination, and the occasional set-back.

"Originally, I attempted to get hold of a coach-type bus and had approached Greyhound's regional office in Denver," he says. "They were all for the idea and said they had a bus we could use--until the idea got to corporate legal, and they killed it." They didn't give any reasons, says Rooker, but he suspects the company didn't want the adverse publicity showing one of its buses going down the side of a mountain, even when it was only a drill. "When I put the word out, the transportation supervisor for one of our schools said he had a bus he was ready to decommission, and we were able to use that. You get resources by reaching out and asking, and you share with them exactly what you're trying to do. If they have some reservations about it, get them involved by asking them to come up with a good solution, and then give them credit for being a team-player."

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