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Sunday, January 14, 2001

Practicing icy rescues

Sharonville firefighters learn lifesaving techniques

By Jenny Callison
Enquirer Contributor

SHARONVILLE — Members of the fire department expanded their rescue skills Saturday as they tackled the big chill.

Guided by the water rescue team from Boone County, Ky., about 23 firefighters spent the day learning and practicing ice rescue techniques at Sharon Woods Lake.

"We gear this course toward firefighters and police agencies, because they're the first ones on the scene," said Lt. Rick Hatton, a public safety scuba instructor with Boone County Water Rescue.

Trainees used several rescue methods to pull their Boone County "victims" to safety from holes dug in the 6-inch-thick ice.

"In order to do it, we have to assess the condition of the ice and the victim's condition," said Lt. Hatton. "We have to remember that the victim's condition is going to deteriorate quickly. Time is a big factor."

When water is 34 degrees, it takes five minutes or less for hypothermia to become serious enough that victims start losing their grip and their reason.

Organization and



Acting as victim in an ice rescue drill, Bill Fitzpatrick of the Sharonville Fire Department hangs on to a rope to be pulled out of frozen Sharon Woods Lake.

(Jeff Swinger photo)
| ZOOM |

FROZEN DANGER

- Water lowers body temperature 25 times faster than air does.
- Hypothermia (lowered body temperature) can set in much more quickly than most people realize. Shivering is the first

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communication are vital, Lt. Hatton said.

“There are five different roles in the rescue team,” he said. “The commander is in charge, and determines which type of rescue to use. There's the primary rescuer and a secondary rescuer, who's a backup. The primary backup stays on shore to assess the situation, make first contact with the victim, and provide information to the commander. A secondary backup goes and gets equipment, does whatever needs to be done to help the rescue effort.”

If a person is alert, rescuers first attempt to use rope to pull them to shore. If that isn't possible, someone is sent onto the ice.

Sharonville fire inspector Kevin Willman, who arranged for the training, played both rescuer and victim Saturday.

“We're looking to upgrade our training because of the lakes and water retention ponds in this area, especially Sharon Woods,” he said. “We're getting equipment for ice rescue, and all 50 of our people will be trained by the end of the month.”

sign. • If you fall through ice, try to stay calm and move as little as possible, retaining strength and body heat for survival. Call for help and hang onto the edge of the ice for support.

• If you see someone fall through the ice, call the rescue squad immediately but do not venture onto the ice yourself. If you are close enough, try throwing a rope or heavy extension cord. Tell the victim beforehand.

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