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Icing public safety training

Group teaches water rescue skills

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PETERSBURG - Kevin Neil cautiously walked toward the center of the frozen pond behind the Creation Museum.

Someone had fallen through the ice that covers the three-acre, 21-foot-deep pond.

Wearing a bright yellow wetsuit and tethered to the shore, Neil jumps in to save the victim bobbing slowly up and down in the ice-cold water.

This was only a drill, but, officials said, the museum's public safety department will be ready.

"Boone County did great," museum public safety officer Darrin Howell said. "They are absolutely wonderful for coming out here and doing this. You couldn't ask for a better bunch of individuals. Their professionalism, as well as their knowledge, is top of the line."

It was the second time Howell had completed the training.

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<http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=AB&Dato=20090117&Kategori=NEWS0103&Lopenr=901170803&Ref=PH>
`onclick="window.open('http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=AB&Dato=20090117&Kategori=NEWS0103&Lopenr=901170803&Ref=PH','width=775,height=695,status=no,toolbar=no,location=no,scrollbars=no,resizable=no');return false;">Photos: Ice rescue training`

While Neil, an officer for the museum's public safety department, said it wasn't as easy as it looked to pull someone out of the water, he called the experience "awesome."

He, along with first responders from Campbell County, spent Saturday afternoon training in the field. That was on top of about four hours of classroom instruction. A written test still followed the classroom and field training.

"Our major goal here is to prepare, at least the public safety department, in the event that someone falls in this lake," said Capt. Dale Appel of Boone County Water Rescue.

His group organizes such training every winter. Other groups wanting the training include fire departments from Lexington and Bright, Ind., Appel said.

Appel said the exercise shows the dangers of people walking on ice.

"We don't encourage anybody to get on the ice for any reason, whatsoever," Appel said.

The water rescue group, established in 1967 under the direction of the Boone County Civil Defense program, is a volunteer group that trains more than 12,000 hours annually in water rescue activities. Currently under the direction of Boone County Emergency Management, the team is available 24 hours a day.

From the original goal of recovering drowning victims, the team's activities have expanded to include evidence collection, vehicle recovery, an active Ohio River boat patrol program, rapid rescue and water safety education.
