

Press Release

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Omaha Fire Department Upgrades Live Fire Training: Selected Dräger Swede Survival System

PITTSBURGH, PA – Like many fire departments in the nation today, the Omaha Fire Department has a predominantly young force that needed thorough training to learn and understand the complexities of fire behavior. In order to upgrade the department’s live fire training program for both rookie and experienced firefighters, the department selected the Dräger Swede Survival System to train all 684 firefighters on the force.

The Dräger Swede Survival System is a special configuration of Class “A” metal shipping containers that provide a safe laboratory in which firefighters can observe and learn about fire behavior in a controlled setting. The Dräger Swede Survival System meets the criteria for National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 1001, 1401 and 1500 standards. The five-phase system provides options to select the system that best meets the department’s training requirements.

For its busy urban environment, Omaha selected the Phase 5 system (one of five available), which went online in September 2009. The multi-level system provides insights into the complexities inherent in multi-story fire situations. With burn rooms on different levels, trainees practice staging, multiple entry techniques, and search and rescue operations.

“In a little over two months, we have logged almost 1,000 hours of training on the simulator,” said Ron Benak, Omaha Fire Department Battalion Chief. Rob McEvoy, Training Battalion Chief, added that “while the simulator initially is being used for fire behavior and attack training, we hope to eventually add more advanced training.”

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Previously, the Omaha department used acquired structures for its live fire training program. “Acquired structures don’t come along often enough,” Benak explained.

McEvoy added that the Dräger Swede Survival System is also more efficient and provides better control. “It is very helpful to have a fixed location for all our training. It’s the same every time we use it,” he said. “The upper fire box can go through ten to fifteen cycles, including hydraulic ventilation, before it has to be completely knocked down and refueled.”

A critical component of the Dräger Swede Survival System is a sophisticated ‘train the trainer’ program. Two certified instructors, both from the Los Angeles Fire Department, conducted a two-day on-site training program for twelve students. The goal was to prepare this group to train additional trainers on the force. The training session included briefings and presentations, along with hands-on experience in the simulator.

“To date, we have trained about fifty individuals who will become trainers on the system,” McEvoy said. “Another twenty firefighters have gone through the program as their student trainees. We plan to bring all captains up to instructor level.”

McEvoy noted that they plan to have eight instructors on each of three suppression shifts. “Working in the simulator can be rough on instructors who are exposed to a lot of smoke and heat,” he added. “With a big contingent of qualified trainers, individuals will not spend an excessive amount of time in the live fire simulator.”

The Dräger Swede Survival System is part of the Omaha Public Safety Training Center. The \$32 million center is housed on 116 acres and is shared by the Omaha Fire Department, Police Department and National Guard. The Dräger

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Swede Survival System was funded through a grant from the Urban Security Initiative (UASI) program of the Department of Homeland Security.

The Dräger Swede Survival System is now required training in 237 departments throughout the United States. Developed by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency College in Skovde, Sweden, the system is used to train all firefighters in Sweden and is used in fire training facilities throughout the world.

Dräger offers complete hazard management solutions with a focus on personal safety. For more information, visit www.draeger.com or call 1-800-615-5503.
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Dräger Safety AG & Co. KGaA is the manufacturer of the product Dräger Swede Survival System.

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