

Press Release

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Omaha Fire Department Launches Advanced 'Live Fire' Training Program

Pittsburgh, PA – Understanding how fire behaves is considered the most effective weapon for fighting fires and saving lives. With a predominantly young workforce, the Omaha Fire Department has launched an advanced live fire training program that gives firefighters the knowledge and the benefit of experience once gained only through years on the job.

Both rookie and experienced firefighters need to recognize the warning signs of a rollover and an impending flashover, when gases from the fire get so hot they actually ignite the smoke. They need to know how best to fight fires that now burn hotter and faster due to the use of synthetic materials. They need to know techniques to suppress fires and to rescue occupants. And they need to know when to get out.

To upgrade their live fire training program, the Omaha Fire Department decided to go a high tech route with the recent purchase of the Dräger Swede Survival training system. The simulator is a configuration of metal shipping containers that provide a safe laboratory in which firefighters can learn about fire behavior in a controlled setting. For its busy urban environment, they chose the Phase 5 (one of 5 systems available) multi-level system with burn rooms on different levels. Here, firefighters can practice staging, multiple entry techniques, and search and rescue operations.

“Since acquiring the system in September 2009, we have logged over 1,000 man-hours of training in the simulator,” said Rob McEvoy, Omaha Fire Department Battalion Chief, Training Bureau. “Eventually, all 657 firefighters on the force will be trained in the Dräger Swede Survival system.”

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

The Dräger Swede Survival training system is loaded with wood and ignited. Temperatures can reach as high as 400-degrees at the floor and above 1,000

Contact

Corporate Communications:
Burkard Dillig
Tel +49 451 882-2185
burkard.dillig@draeger.com

Drägerwerk AG & Co. KGaA
Moislinger Allee 53–55
23542 Lübeck, Germany

Trade press:
Marion Varec
Tel +1 215 660 2186
marion.varec@draeger.com

Dräger
3135 Quarry Road
Telford, PA
www.draeger.com

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degrees at the ceiling in the burn rooms. Firefighters can observe fire behavior and see the warning signs of an impending flashover or backdraft, giving them the time they need to get out safely.

The Omaha Fire Department has implemented a sophisticated ‘train the trainer’ program that will eventually enable them to train all the firefighters on the force. Dräger sent two certified instructors from the Los Angeles Fire Department to conduct an on-site training program for twelve students. The goal was to prepare this group to train additional instructors on the force.

McEvoy said that they originally planned to have eight instructors on each of three shifts. The department is currently working towards increasing this number. “Working in the simulator can be rough on instructors who are exposed to a lot of smoke and heat,” he said. “With a larger contingent of qualified instructors, individuals will not spend an excessive amount of time in the live fire simulator.”

The company’s fire training 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 Swede system was funded through a grant from the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program of the Department of Homeland Security.

Now required training in 237 departments throughout the United States, the Swede Survival training system meets the National Fire Protection criteria for firefighter job performance, live fire training, and occupational safety and health. 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.
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Dräger Safety AG & Co. KGaA is the manufacturer of the Dräger Swede Survival training system.

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Contact

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generated revenues of around EUR 1.9 billion. The Dräger Group is currently present in more than 190 countries and has about 11,000 employees worldwide. Please visit www.draeger.com for more information.

Investor Relations, Vanina Herbst, Tel: +49 451 882 2685. E-Mail: vanina.herbst@draeger.com

Contact

Corporate Communications:
Burkard Dillig
Tel +49 451 882-2185
burkard.dillig@draeger.com

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