

Tools News Techniques

Equipment | How To | Training | People | **Gear Test** | Web & Media | Events

Special Operations Recovery Drag

PROS

- + Allows for fast removal of downed firefighters;
- + Decreases the possibility of equipment snagging during extrications; and
- + Cost effective.

CONS

- None.

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Live by the S.O.R.D. Special Operations Recovery Drag cuts down rescue time

By Travis Kidd

Rescuing a fellow firefighter is a task no one wants to perform, but we train for it should the need arise. And although there are several techniques for extracting a firefighter from an immediately-dangerous-to-life-and-health atmosphere, the task can become very arduous. A downed firefighter's first need—air—requires a rapid intervention team (RIT) to bring in an air pack. Lighting is always an issue, so flashlights are necessary, as are rope and other tools. Add to that the weight of the downed firefighter and the rescue becomes quite a task. *The bottom line:* When rescuing one of our own, we must move a lot of weight in a condensed amount of time. Total Fire Group's Special Operations Recovery Drag, or S.O.R.D., is one product that helps move downed firefighters quickly.

The S.O.R.D. is a 5' x 5' tarp constructed of 100 percent Kevlar, including the handles and stitching. The tarp is also tear/cut resistant and has a maximum carrying weight of 6,275 lbs.

Because the S.O.R.D. is made out of Kevlar, it's incredibly flexible. Handles are located on every side of the S.O.R.D., allowing for numerous loading and carrying configurations. The S.O.R.D. can also carry all the other equipment you need to assist the downed firefighter, leaving your hands free to pull the S.O.R.D. and the firefighter out of the building.

I tested the S.O.R.D. in the bay at Station 40 in Orange County, Fla. I began the test by instructing Firefighter 1 (the "downed firefighter") to lie face up in a corner. Firefighter 2 and I then approached her with the S.O.R.D., which was rolled up according to the manufacturer's specifications. I threw the end of the roll out toward the head of Firefighter 1. Together, Firefighter 2 and I spread out the S.O.R.D. so it reached from Firefighter 1's head to her knees. Once we completely rolled out the S.O.R.D., we log-rolled Firefighter 1 onto the tarp, grabbed the handles on either end of the tarp and lifted her up.

Let's be honest for just a minute. Any time you must move a firefighter who's unconscious or otherwise unable to move, they're dead weight, and the tasks of picking them up and carrying them out of the building won't be simple. So you must drag them across the structure's surface and maneuver around corners and over obstacles to successfully extricate them from the building. This is where the S.O.R.D.'s flexibility comes in handy, proving the product is a far better extrication tool than more rigid patient-removal devices.

After concluding the S.O.R.D. was capable of moving a downed firefighter, I wanted to determine the most efficient way of moving her and how to best position her for rapid extrication. Firewear.com, Total Fire Group's link for information on the S.O.R.D., provides an excellent tutorial on the various ways to configure and use the S.O.R.D. The site provides one quick and easy technique that involves



PHOTO STEVE KIDD

The S.O.R.D. allows you to safely pull a downed firefighter, plus any other rescue equipment you need, out of a burning building.

Protecting Pets

Two new pet-friendly products focus on fire safety

Fire prevention and safety efforts are usually directed at saving lives—human lives. But what about pets? That’s what Gail Eicken and Brenda Cole asked themselves when they devised the concepts for two fire-safety products that recently won second and third place in a national contest for pet-friendly inventions.

In October 2005, PetSafe, a company that focuses on the development of safe, reliable and technologically sound pet products, launched IdeaFetch, a national pet product invention contest. More than 5,000 ideas were submitted, and the top 100 winners were selected from online votes by the public and a panel of celebrity judges; PetSafe engineers chose the final top 10 winners.

On March 23, PetSafe unveiled the top three winners at the American Pet Product Manufacturer’s Association (APPMA) Global Pet Expo in San Diego. Eicken and Cole accepted their \$5,000 and \$2,500 awards, respectively, and demonstrated their winning inventions.

Gail Eicken, a former New Jersey volunteer EMT, along with her husband, Gary, a former volunteer firefighter, developed the Pet Fire Alert Collar to aid firefighters in locating pets in house fires. Working in the industry for many years, the couple has seen their share of pet fatalities and injuries at fires. “I’ve seen cats and dogs come out of burning buildings, and I’ve heard people asking firefighters about their pets,” Gail explains. “Many times after a fire, firefighters find pets in corners or under furniture because they won’t bark or make noise.”

To combat this problem, Gail designed the first-ever pet collar designed for pet fire safety. The Pet Fire Alert Collar features a microphone and microchip that interface with any standard home smoke detector. When a household smoke detector alarm sounds, the collar activates and produces a series of flashing lights and an audible sound. Gary adds that the collar only reacts to a sustained alarm, so “it won’t go off for minor mishaps, such as when you burn toast.” The alert device is worn on the back of the pet’s neck and comes with a built-in comb to keep it in place.

Third-place winner Brenda Cole, a retired engineer from Baltimore, created the Home-Along Pet Fire Escape, a collar-activated pet door. “My worst



Gail Eicken, a former volunteer EMT, developed the Pet Fire Alert Collar.

PHOTO COURTESY PETS SAFE



One way to safely place a downed firefighter onto the S.O.R.D.: Unroll the tarp beside them, then log-roll the firefighter onto it.

PHOTO STEVE KIDD



PHOTO STEVE KIDD

The S.O.R.D.’s flexibility allows you to drag a downed firefighter across a structure’s surface and maneuver around corners and over obstacles to successfully extricate them from the building.

putting the S.O.R.D. in a harness configuration, so we tried it. While Firefighter 1 was still resting on the tarp, I brought the bottom handle up between Firefighter 1’s legs to meet with two handles on either side. I then connected all three handles with a carabiner. Firefighter 2 and I were then able to stand at Firefighter 1’s head and concentrate all of our pulling force on one end. Not only was this easier on us, but it was more comfortable for the downed firefighter.

Note: Don’t let the “special operations” portion of the name fool you. The main advantage to using the S.O.R.D.: Firefighters can use this tool for a variety of applications that may or may not involve special ops, including maneuvering unconscious victims down stairs or ladders, raising them up out of a trench or confined space or just removing them from a building or home.

At \$500, the S.O.R.D. is a great deal and should be a staple in your department’s RIT cache.

Travis Kidd has been a firefighter/EMT with the Orange County (Fla.) Fire Department for the past six years and is currently assigned to Rescue 40.



Brenda Cole developed the Home-Along Pet Fire Escape, a collar-activated pet door.

PHOTO COURTESY PETS SAFE

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TNT

nightmare is a catastrophic fire while I'm away, in which my pets have no chance to escape," she says. The issue is meaningful to Cole since she cannot allow her cat to go between indoors and out while she's at work.

After seeing the contest announcement, Cole started thinking about creating a product that could alleviate this problem. "I thought of the smoke detector and wondered, 'If it can communicate with the security company, why not a pet door?'" she says. So she developed the Home-Along Pet Fire Escape pet door, which features a wireless device on pet doors that would unlock and open the doors in the event a smoke detector sounds. The device could also be used on crates or gate doors.

Prior to the Pet Expo, the winners had only seen photos of the prototypes, which were built by M3 Designs. Cole says she has enjoyed the entire process, especially seeing the dedication of the PetSafe employees. "I have always loved pets, but I have never been around people who love pets as much as these people," she says. Cole says she submitted 100 ideas to the IdeaFetch contest. "Of the 100 ideas, I guarantee there are many that could have been more profitable for PetSafe than the Home-Along Pet Fire Escape," she explains, "but they chose the product that truly improves the life and safety of animals."

Doug Grindstaff, vice president of new market development for PetSafe, says the contest was created to find new product concepts that can make a difference in the lives of pets and their owners. "It is no surprise that all our winners focused on pet safety," he says. "Natural disasters, like Hurricane Katrina, are drawing national attention to the need for pet rescue ideas."

Grindstaff says the product names have been trademarked and the products patented. PetSafe owns the rights to the products now, but Eicken and Cole's names are on the patents, too.

First-place winner Jonathan Warren developed The MicroID Collar, which incorporates a flash card memory device into a pet's collar. The device features an electronic journal for storing the pet and owner information. Warren won \$40,000 and will have his product developed and sold for one year at PETCO stores nationwide. As for Cole and Gail and Gary Eicken, their products will also be developed and sold in pet retailers beginning Spring 2007.

Company News

A Generous Contribution

Motorola's \$1 million donation will support scholarships & events for survivors of fallen firefighters

Motorola Inc. and the Motorola Foundation recently made a \$1 million donation to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) to fund the Paul S. Sarbanes Scholarship Program and activities related to the annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend. "This donation is an enormous benefit to survivor families looking to rebuild their lives after the loss of their loved ones," says Hal Bruno, Chairman of the NFFF. "It



PHOTO COURTESY RICK REIHARD

Motorola donated \$1 million to the NFFF.

will also help us honor our nation's heroes and their families during the annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend. The scholarship program and memorial weekend are significant NFFF undertakings, and I want to thank Motorola and the Motorola Foundation for their generous donation that will help support these worthwhile efforts."

"On behalf of Motorola employees, we salute our nation's fire service and pay tribute to the fallen firefighters who have given the ultimate sacrifice in serving their communities," says Kelly Kirwan, vice president of Motorola Networks & Enterprise business. "Motorola is privileged to team with the NFFF and assist the survivors of our fallen fire service heroes."

The Sarbanes Scholarship Program is named after Senator Paul Sarbanes (D.-Md.), who helped launch the program in 1997. The Motorola Foundation's donation to the program will support students pursuing careers in the areas of science,

technology, engineering and math. The donation to the NFFF annual memorial weekend will enable survivor families to attend the event and participate in activities under the Fire Service Survivors Network.

SURVIVOR STORIES

Helen King

The NFFF's Sarbanes Scholarship Program benefits people like Helen King of Alamo, Tenn., the first spouse to receive a scholarship from the Foundation. King lost her husband, volunteer firefighter Larry King Sr., when he died in the line of duty at the scene of a motor vehicle accident. The NFFF assisted King and her family by awarding her a scholarship to pursue a degree from West Tennessee Business College.

King completed her studies in 2001, enabling her to better provide for her family through her employment at Lane College. She has worked with the Foundation as a volunteer since 1999 and was recently appointed to the Foundation's advisory board. "I am very thankful to the NFFF for the opportunity it gave our family," says King, "and I think Motorola's generosity is wonderful because it will enable many more survivor families to have the kind of opportunities that I have had to rebuild my family."

Jessica Seaburg

Jessica Seaburg of Delmar, N.Y., is the daughter of fallen firefighter Kevin Seaburg, who suffered a fatal heart attack after battling a house fire in 1997 and died when Seaburg was just 13 years old. As a result, Jessica had to assume a lot of additional responsibilities, helping her mother raise her 5-year-old sister. With the help of the Sarbanes Scholarship program, Seaburg has attended Sage College of Albany and will graduate in May with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and Law. "I plan on pursuing a career in the family court system," Seaburg says, "which would enable me to help other children. I'm eager to serve my community just as my father once did. The Foundation's assistance reduced the burden of financial hardship on my studies, just as the Motorola donation will give other survivors the opportunity to further their educational goals and personal growth to the fullest extent."

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TNT
Community Involvement

Life-Shavers

Virginia firefighters go bald for a good cause

By Jane Jerrard

Fire departments across the country participate in many fundraising activities—some to raise money for their own under-funded stations and others to help out good causes. And some departments, such as the Chesapeake (Va.) Fire Department (CFD), go to the extreme when it comes to charitable fundraising. Last March, several members of the CFD shaved their heads bald in exchange for donations.

Money raised during the CFD's head-shaving campaign and black-tie benefit went to both a gift fund for a Chesapeake firefighter's 4-year-old daughter who is currently struggling with leukemia and the St. Baldrick's Foundation, a nonprofit association that raises awareness and funds to fight children's cancer.

The Foundation created "St. Baldrick's Day," which falls on St. Patrick's Day, and designated it the official day on which brave volunteers from anywhere in the country can shave their heads bald for the Foundation's cause. By shaving their heads, volunteers display solidarity with children with cancer, who typically lose their hair during chemotherapy. Hundreds of head-shaving events take place each year; over the past six years, St. Baldrick's has raised more than \$12 million for the search for a cure.



PHOTO BRIAN MCINTOSH

Some of the children battling cancer join in the festivities and shave a few heads.

OFF WITH THEIR HAIR!

This past St. Patrick's Day was the first time the CFD held a St. Baldrick's fundraiser, and they got off to a successful start. "We had two goals," says CFD Deputy Fire Chief Ed Elliott. "One, obviously, was to raise money for the children, and the other one was to have a lot of fun. We met both goals 100 percent."

With help from the local Deep Water Chapter of the Fraternal Order of Leather Heads Society (F.O.O.L.S.), a fraternal fire organization, the CFD organized the fundraising event, which included a formal benefit dinner for St. Baldrick's Day. Tickets cost \$75 per person or \$125 per



PHOTO BRIAN MCINTOSH

Division Chief Barry Jennings gives Lt. Christine Dosmann a very short "haircut."

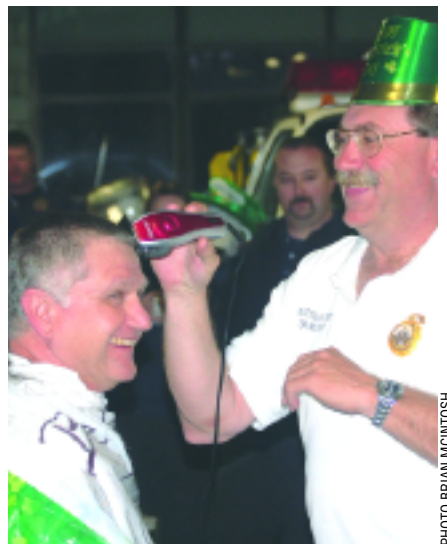


PHOTO BRIAN MCINTOSH

Battalion Chief Tom McCrory shaves the chief's head. Deputy Chief Ed Elliott put up a fight before he lost his hair, but in doing so, he raised a lot of money for St. Baldrick's.

Hundreds of head-shaving events take place each year, & over the past six years, St. Baldrick's has raised more than \$12 million for the search for a cure.

couple; profits from the dinner alone totaled \$5,000.

In addition, 12 CFD members who agreed to have their heads shaved raised around \$8,000 in pledges, and much of that came from fellow firefighters. Lt. Christine Dosmann even agreed to have her head shaved during the benefit dinner. "One guy said he'd pay \$300 to see my head shaved," she says. "He's so tight with his money that I said yes right away. He had to go schedule some overtime to pay for it."

Several pledges went to Elliott, who fought baldness to the bitter end, when he ended up losing his hair on local live television. "They were after my hair," he says. "I played along with it right up to the night before. There were two teams, 'Save It' and 'Shave It,' and in the end, I was the only guy who wanted to save it. I didn't go down easy, but we raised a lot of money because I put up such a fight." A CFD battalion chief even donated \$100 so he could be the one to shave Elliott's head.

A GOOD FIRST EFFORT

CFD Lt. Keith Carawan says the department wasn't sure how successful the event would be. "We'd never done anything like this," he explains. "We were crossing our fingers that we'd break even." In the end, approximately 150 people attended the benefit and spent around \$1,000 on challenge coins.

When all the pledges for the head shavers are collected, the CFD should have about \$14,000 in charitable contributions. "The people from St. Baldrick's in this area were really impressed with how we did," says Carawan. "This was a good first effort, but I'm hoping next year we'll do even better."

Will the CFD firefighters be willing to lose their hair a second time? Dosmann answers without hesitation, "Sure, I'd do it again—for the cause."

To read more on the St. Baldrick's Foundation, sign up to raise funds or make a donation, visit www.stbaldricks.org.

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Icons Remembered

The fire service loses two of its most influential members

At the time of this publication, the staff at *FireRescue* learned of the passing of Ed McCormack, the “Father of FDIC,” who died April 11 in Massachusetts at the age of 67, and Tom Brennan, a 20-year veteran of the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) and former editor of *Fire Engineering* magazine, who died April 19 at the age of 66. We take a moment here to remember the lives of these two firefighters, their accomplishments, their contributions and their life-long passion for their job.

Those who knew McCormack (also known as “Big Ed”) well knew his greatest passion was fighting fire. He strove to better the fire service in any way he could, mentoring younger, less experienced firefighters and dealing with job-related issues head on. In the mid-1970s, Ed served as chief of the Massachusetts Fire Academy and the secretary of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI). He went on to become chairman of ISFSI. Over the course of his lifetime, his efforts influenced many facets of the fire service, including the NFPA Fire Service Professional Qualifications Standards, the National Fire Service Professional Qualifications System, the first “Essentials of Firefighting” text, the creation of the U.S. Fire Administration and the National Fire Academy, the creation of the Fire Department Safety Officers Association, growing FDIC from a conference of fewer than 2,000 people with no exhibits to one of many thousands with hundreds of exhibits and the coaching and mentoring of many people who hold leadership positions in the fire service today.

Brennan had firefighting coursing through his veins—both his father and grandfather were FDNY firefighters. Brennan began his career with FDNY in the early 1960s, retiring 20 years later as a captain. In 1983, Brennan became the editor of *Fire Engineering* magazine, where he used his expertise to strengthen the publication’s presence in the industry and put his love for and dedication to the fire service into the pages of every issue. He left the magazine in 1990 to become chief of the Waterbury (Conn.) Fire Department, but he remained a regular contributor to the publication and served as a technical editor.

According to his readership, Brennan was an honest, hard-working father figure who imparted his street-wise wisdom to younger firefighters and greatly increased the level of awareness and importance of both truck company operations and forcible-entry procedures. Brennan also took part in many national training presentations and helped develop the National Fire Academy curriculum.

Brennan held a bachelor’s degree in fire science from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where he

graduated summa cum laude. He was awarded the College’s Distinguished Alumni Award some 20 years later. In 1998, Brennan received Fire Engineering’s Lifetime Achievement Award. He was co-editor of “The Fire Chief’s Handbook,” Fifth Edition, was featured in the video “Brennan and Bruno Unplugged” and regularly contributed to Firenuggets.com. He is survived by his wife Janet, whom he married in 1964, and their four children, Thomas, Teresa, Eileen and Brian.

LODD

NIOSH Line-of-Duty Death Report

Career firefighter dies from injuries sustained in fall from apparatus

SUMMARY

On April 30, 2004, a 58-year-old male career firefighter sustained a fatal head injury when he fell from a moving cab-forward engine. The engine was responding to a reported gas odor with a firefighter/driver and an officer inside the cab and two firefighters, including the victim, seated in the open jump seats. Upon departure from the station, the engine made a right turn from the apron onto the street, causing the victim to fall out of the driver-side jump seat door, land on the street and strike his head. He was treated at the scene for head trauma and transported to a local hospital. He died from his injuries three days after the incident.



PHOTO COURTESY NIOSH

The engine made a right turn onto the street, causing the victim to fall out of the driver-side jump seat door and strike his head on the pavement.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The death certificate listed the cause of death as blunt force head trauma.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Fire departments should ensure that all persons responding in emergency apparatus are secured by seat belts or safety restraints whenever the vehicle is in motion.
- Fire departments should ensure that routine apparatus maintenance includes documented inspections of all seating areas.
- Fire departments should ensure, when feasible, that each crew riding position is within a fully enclosed personnel area.
- Fire departments should ensure that all interior crew and driving compartment door handles are designed and installed to protect against inadvertent opening.
- Fire departments should ensure that the donning or doffing of equipment and personal protective clothing that requires removal of any restraining device is prohibited while the vehicle is in motion. ☺