Press Release

Release Nr: 2207-10

July 27, 2022

Fort Drum Public Affairs

Volunteer firefighters hone skills at Fort Drum FES training facility

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (July 26, 2022) -- Sounds of chainsaws tearing into wood and pry bars forcing open a metal doorway echoed into the evening while local volunteer firefighters practiced their tradecraft July 21 at the Fort Drum Fire and Emergency Services’ training facility.

Fourteen trainees from several Jefferson County fire departments are attending the Interior Firefighting Operations Course, provided by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC).

In addition to forcible entry and tactical ventilation techniques, the training covers topics ranging from firefighter survival techniques and fire control methods to self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) air management and victim removal techniques.

Joe Plummer, Jefferson County Fire and Emergency Management director, said the training evolution includes 16 lessons that started in the classroom but then shifted largely to hands-on activities.

“In this class, they get trained to go into burning buildings, (and) put the fire out, as well as what to watch for,” he said. “They also are learning how to breach doors and how to cut holes in roofs for ventilation. On top of all that, everything they that are doing – and what the state instructors are watching for – is 110-percent safety-oriented.”

Plummer said that the group previously completed basic exterior firefighting operations (BEFO), which prepares new firefighters to operate outside of a structure at the fire scene.

“At the end of the day, when both of these classes are completed, they will have put in about 120 hours of training. That’s a lot of work. And the instructors are really good about pushing them to their limits throughout the training – not for the sake of being hard, but to prove to themselves they can do this.”

Plummer recently participated in Fort Drum’s annual full-scale exercise, which assembled first responders and emergency service agencies from across the tri-county area to assess crisis response and readiness.

“We work really well with Fort Drum, and it’s been that way for a long time,” he said. “It’s simply the right thing to do. This training amplifies that partnership, not just between our fire services but between Jefferson County and Fort Drum.”

Fort Drum Fire Chief Jason Brunet said that opening the facility to state instructors and trainees made sense, considering most of the installation’s fire personnel also serve as volunteer firefighters in their community.

“It’s going to make our fire departments better and our communities safer,” he said. “We have the resources available for this training, so it wasn’t a question of ‘are we going to let them use it’ but rather ‘when do you want it?’”

The training will continue at the Fort Drum facility through August.

“When they are all done and they’ve taken their final exams, they become certified as a Firefighter Level I,” Plummer said. “Then they go back to their home fire departments where they might have other requirements to go through. But after this training, they’ve basically accomplished what they need to start fighting fires.”

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Pictures to accompany this article can be found at:

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