



January 24, 2017

NAS Jacksonville fire crew gets out of tight situation at FRCSE



Members of First Coast Navy Fire and Rescue hoist the “victim” out of an engine elevator shaft at the Crinkley Engine Facility at Fleet Readiness Center Southeast on Jan. 12. The drill was designed to test the firefighters’ ability to rescue an immobile victim from a confined space. (U.S. Navy photo)

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – First Coast Fire and Rescue got a victim out of a tight spot at the Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Crinkley Engine Facility on Jan. 12.

Thankfully, the victim was a dummy – a mannequin – and the call was only a training exercise for firefighters to perfect the techniques they would use to extract victims from confined spaces.

“If you get in a hurry, you start forgetting things,” said station chief John Dales. “So we have to keep refreshing the techniques in their minds to make certain there are no mistakes.”

That was the idea behind the exercise.

The department made use of the engine elevator shafts that were installed in the floor at Crinkley to raise and lower engines, so employees could work on J-52 engines without climbing ladders.

David Rickel, the training chief for the fire and rescue department, took the dummy down to



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the bottom of the shaft – roughly 20 feet – and got an employee to call the firefighters.

“They have to come in and assess the situation,” Rickel said. “All they know is that they have someone hurt down in the bottom of a pit.”

Members of the First Coast Navy Fire and Rescue arrived, set up their equipment and tested the air to make sure it was safe. Firefighter Russell Russ and paramedic Tracy Tomes descended into the shaft’s relative darkness, all that could realistically fit in the roughly 6-foot-wide chamber.

Within minutes the patient was stabilized, and their colleagues at the surface used ropes to pull the victim out.

It was a training exercise, but Rickel and Dales have seen such situations in real life.

For Rickel, it was in a tank aboard an aircraft carrier. For Dales, it was in a steam pit at Naval Air Station Jacksonville. When victims find themselves injured in a confined space, it can be a life-threatening situation for all involved.

“It’s an extremely serious situation,” Rickel said. “If we do something wrong, it could cause death or paralysis, so we immobilize them, strap the victim down and pull them out.”

The real-world implications of the drill were not lost on FRCSE employees watching the scene play out.

“If we ever have a person trapped in a confined space, they are our primary rescue service,” Fleet Readiness Center Southeast safety and occupational health specialist Andrew Bass said. “It’s important for any of us to know that if we’re ever in a situation like that, these guys will get us out.”



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Members of the First Coast Fire and Rescue team prepare to lift up a grate covering an engine elevator shaft Jan. 12 at the Crinkley Engine Facility. (U.S. Navy photo)

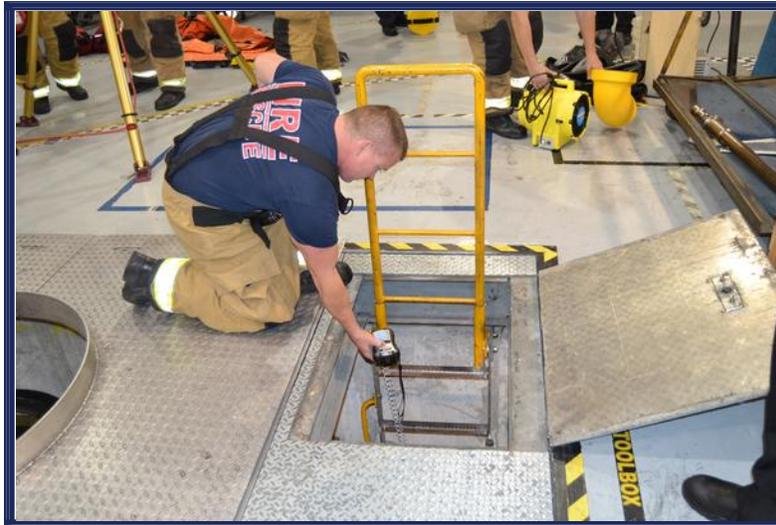


Firefighters Christopher Hicks, left, and Thomas Gamble, right, carry their equipment into Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Crinkley Engine Facility to extract a victim from a confined space. (U.S. Navy photo)



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Firefighter Thomas Gamble, of First Coast Navy Fire & Rescue, tests the air inside an engine elevator shaft to ensure it is safe to enter without a breathing device. The firefighters were conducting a drill at Fleet Readiness Center Southeast Crinkley Engine Facility on Jan. 12. (U.S. Navy photo)