

THE NEWS SUN

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Team practices mock disaster drill

By Jaime Anton
Staff Writer

BROOK PARK — A tornado devastates the city, grossly impacting City Hall and activating the Community Emergency Response Team to aid safety forces in rescuing any survivors.

This was Saturday's mock disaster scenario for newly trained team members.

Veteran team members posed as victims scattered throughout the building, along with Red Cross Annie dummies, to give rookies a taste of what a real emergency would be like.

The team was formed in 2007 as a supplemental measure to city departments during emergencies or special events.

Members were recently activated during the winter storm two weeks ago and the flooding Aug. 7.

At the mock disaster, CERT rookie Mark Miller, 45, volunteered to be the group's commander.

"I'll send someone around
See DRILL, page A8

Drill

from page A1

the building first to access and determine if it's safe," Miller explained before the exercise. "Then I'll send the team in, and we'll do a search of the entire building. As we come across victims, we'll treat them and move them out."

His 19-year-old son, Tyler, is a new member, too.

The first danger the team faced was a "blaze," which was actually the city's extinguisher simulator.

Once the fire was out, the team moved indoors.

One of the No. 1 rules during a search is to stay in pairs.

As members entered City Hall they were immediately greeted by a belligerent receptionist impeding search efforts, a woman with crushed legs, an unresponsive man with head trauma, a mother with a broken leg, an injured baby, a dying mayor and a dizzy, combative man.

One by one they pulled everyone out, while trying to coordinate efforts, remember their training, and even use hand-held radios, in most cases, for the first time.

"Now I'm all alone," Tom Troyer, 47, said, self-critiquing aloud after searching a room.

Though only a learning experience and not a true disaster, nerves were the name of the game.

"It really freaks them out because they are so scared," Safety Director Angelo Nuzzo said, as members were treating the "mavor."

Mitch Gruber, 41, a veteran team member, said like anything else this takes practice.

"It takes time to go through the building and we're not professionals, we're just doing what we are trained to do," he said. "It's a slow process."

Team members were quick to point out their own mistakes — searching alone, missing a victim.

"I think we'll get better with time," new member Amy Diamond said. "Eventually, it will be more of a natural response, and we won't have to think as much. It was a challenge getting used to the radios and diagnosing people."

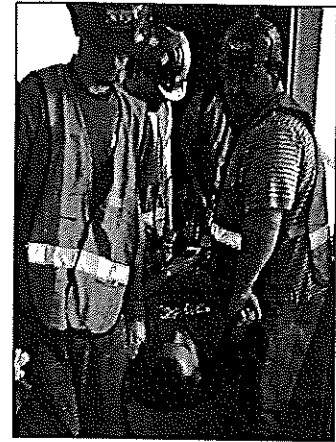
Overall Nuzzo felt the team did a stellar job.

"They see how chaotic things can get, and this was only a drill," Nuzzo said. "So imagine how chaotic a real situation can get. I think it's an eye-opener."

The entire team — new and veteran members — will participate in another mock disaster later this year.

Other new members who participated included Marry Rizzo and Lucille Laurenzi.

Any Brook Park resident interested in joining the team can pick up an application at City Hall,



SUN PHOTO BY JAIME ANTON

From left front to back, new CERT members Tyler Miller, Mark Miller and Tom Troyer carry out one of Saturday's mock tornado disaster victims — Safety Director Angelo Nuzzo's son, Matt. Jim Rizzo, right, was helping the team but is not a member.

the fire department on Holland Road, visit the city's public safety link on its Web site www.cityof-brookpark.com, or call Nuzzo at (216) 433-1300.