Law Officers, Fire form Rescue Task Force; training set for Wednesday

Tuesday, July 5, 2016

For years, law enforcement officers have trained together to practice and perfect their response to an active shooter incident. Now, with the formation of a Rescue Task Force, Fire and EMS personnel will join that group, reaching victims even sooner.

“Unlike previous approaches where Fire and EMS would wait and stage until the area is secure, the Rescue Task Force (RTF) will specifically integrate their service with the law enforcement response,” said Sheriff Steve Prator. “Waiting for an area to be secured could take hours. Now the focus is on getting aid to the wounded as soon as possible, even while law enforcement is still clearing the structure.”

On Wednesday, the Caddo Sheriff’s Office of Homeland Security will host a joint active shooter drill at Mall St. Vincent. Participants will include the Caddo Parish Sheriff Office, Shreveport Fire Department, Shreveport Police Department, and Mall St. Vincent Security. Shreveport Fire Academy recruits will play the “victims” during the event. The drill will begin at 6:30 a.m. and conclude by 9:30 a.m. Mall property will be closed to the public during this time.

The exercise will test triage, treatment and transport involving firefighters and EMS during a mock active shooter incident. Fire and EMS will work simultaneously with law enforcement in a secured zone.

“RTF teams allow firefighters, EMS, and law enforcement officers to focus on what they already do best and not try to make Fire into tactical personnel or police into medical treatment experts,” Prator said.

Shreveport Fire Chief Scott Wolverton added, “The training received and the ballistic equipment worn will allow our firefighters to respond to active shooter events under the protection of our law enforcement officers resulting in lifesaving care quicker for our citizens.”

More than 400 Shreveport firefighters and 100 Caddo Parish District firefighters have been trained on the operation of a Rescue Task Force. Training conducted by the Caddo Sheriff’s Office, Shreveport Police Department, and Shreveport Fire Department began in January and included eight-hour sessions of classroom instruction and practical exercises. This is the first joint RTF drill to take place.

*** Media covering the event will stage at the Sears loading dock.**