

Annual Report 2003 Hamilton County Urban Search & Rescue Task Force

USAR

Recognition as Ohio Regional USAR Strike Team

The Task Force has been participating for several years now in the development of a technical rescue response capability for the State of Ohio. The concept of this effort, parented by the Ohio Fire Chief's Association and with the support of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, is to develop for Ohio's fire departments a technical rescue resource within quick response distances. There are technical rescue strike teams developing in all urban areas of the state.

In April, 2003, Hamilton County USAR was recognized as the FIRST deployable regional strike team when we underwent a site visit to verify our capabilities.

Participating in this process has garnered \$225,000 in state grants for Hamilton County and allowed us to develop redundancy in many essential tools and means to deliver them.

Administration / Finance

The Task Force maintains insurance on all our equipment and vehicle. This is at a cost of over \$6000 per year.



We employed a temporary clerk during the year with funds made available to us by Hamilton County. This assistance has allowed significant improvement in Task Force record keeping and filing. The Executive Committee has approved a minimum number of hours for this work in the future.

Additional administrative improvement was made as we consolidated several databases in several locations being used by the Task Force into one database during 2003.

The financial records of the Task Force were transferred to a Quicken data base in 2003 and an audit of the records is pending through the Hamilton County Fire Chief's Association. Records reconciled with our banking institution at the close of the year.

In January 2003, we received a \$30,000 grant from Hamilton County. This grant covered the costs of the temporary administrative hel, our insurance for 2003 and several other minor items. It was not completely used because some of the items intended for purchase with the county grant became covered items under two state grants that we received during the year: a \$15,000 State Homeland Security Grant from

FY 2002 residual funds and a FY 2003 State Homeland Security Grant for \$148,000, from which the new truck was purchased.

A generous grant that has been “recurring” was received from the Robert and Adele Schiff Foundation. WE THANK THE SCHIFF FOUNDATION for their continuing confidence in and support of the Task Force and our work.

Personnel

The Task Force has a roster of 115 members. Twenty-seven (27) departments are represented. This increase from the authorized strength was approved by the Executive Committee early in 2003.

The Task Force is 5 years old and has begun to experience a natural attrition of membership that is not unexpected and actually a healthy organizational occurrence. In 2003, 12 members resigned their positions. Letters of appreciation were sent to all for their service to the Task Force.

Participation Requirements for 2003 continued at the standard set by the Executive Committee in 2002: 2 drill minimum with 1 response. As 2003 ended, 20 members were notified of their deficiencies from this standard. We are still maintaining an applicant list of over 30 names.

Training

The Task Force training effort was again strong in 2003.

Topics covered during “regular” training in 2003 included: Line Rescue, Structural Collapse, Water, Trench and Search.

The Task Force expanded our number of members specifically trained to state recognized levels of proficiency as we held the State Structural Collapse Operations (SCO) level course for 24 of our members.

The two special drills—the MOBEX exercise with Ohio Task Force 1 and the SORTA exercise were also valuable training events.

Special Drills and Exercises

The Hamilton County USAR Task Force participated in two special exercises during the year in addition to our usual training schedule. In July, the Task Force participated in Ohio Task Force 1’s Mobilization Exercise (MOBEX) that occurred in Cincinnati. The MOBEX is a multi-day, multi-venue drill, during which Hamilton County served as first-responding technical rescue agency and coordinated with Ohio TF1 in accomplishing several search scenarios in collapsed buildings.

In October, the Task Force participated in the SORTA exercise simulating an explosion in the transportation tunnel serving the stadium. This exercise involved lifting and moving heavy objects that had

collapsed onto a bus, with multiple entrapped victims.

2003 Response

The Task Force was deployed only one time in the Year 2003.

We responded into the City of Cincinnati in support of CFD units responding to a trench collapse with live victim at a construction site on Woodburn Avenue.

Logistics

A more aggressive effort to notify members of their monthly assigned work check detail was undertaken in 2003. The monthly work detail is intended to improve familiarity with equipment and operational readiness of the Task Force. Participation did not meet expectations in 2003 despite a more aggressive notification process. The Executive Committee will review current procedures for improvement in 2004.

Task Force meters were modified in 2003 for use with standard replaceable batteries, rather than rechargeables.

As 2003 ended, a second vehicle had been purchased with State funding and was being prepared for equipment.

Fire Chief's Web Site

The Task Force participates with the Hamilton County Fire Chief's

Association website. We are using the website to post our training schedule and other information principally aimed at our members. During 2003, we added for our members a SEARCH sop.

In 2004, a review of all current SOP's will be undertaken to improve standardization of form and to update the SOP to current theory and practice.

Report to Fire Chief's Association and Disaster Council

The USAR Task Force has filed an updated program description detailing strengths and limitations of the Task Force with the Hamilton County Fire Chief's Association and with the Hamilton County Disaster Council. Such document serves to keep current the understanding of the Fire Chiefs and the other participants in the Disaster Council process with the capabilities of the USAR Task Force as a special response resource.

Who are we?

The Hamilton County Urban Search & Rescue Task Force is a project of the Hamilton County Fire Chief's Association intended to provide a specially trained, specially equipped technical rescue response team to support our members in technical rescue situations. The Task Force has been operational since 1998.

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