

Training

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– the fire was real and so was all the smoke. But the fire department took extra safety precautions that day, including having EMS and an ambulance present, and there was plenty of water with multiple trucks and hoses deployed to ensure that the training went smoothly.

Not all firefighters have to wield axes and hoses inside burning buildings. There are plenty of support roles for volunteers, such as manning the trucks and making sure the water is ready to be deployed in a timely fashion.

For those who do go into burning buildings, the chief said he likes to make sure they receive that particular training so that it counts in the event of an emergency.

“We like to get them into a practice burn either here or at the Georgia Fire Academy once a year, so that they can be exposed to fire in a safer environment to where they can really work on their technique,” said Chief Dyer. “When you’re going into a structure fire, it’s so dark and so black that you don’t really have a time to work on how you’re putting this fire out, how the fire reacts.

“So, doing it this way, we can have time to – okay, this is how you do a Z pattern, this is how you put water on this type of fire, etc.”

One room in the house had been set up to simulate a contents fire, such as a couch in a real home. Wooden pallets were stacked up and set on fire, and those in the training, or “settee,” got to see how the fire developed and evolved, building on itself until it became something almost sinister with heat.

“Eventually, once that couch catches on fire and it starts heating up the whole entire room, everything else in the room is going to start to burn, and you’re going to have a thing called ‘rollover,’ to where the smoke and heat and the flames go to the top of the ceiling,” said Chief Dyer.

Continued the chief: “And then it starts to roll across the ceiling. That’s a pretty dangerous thing, because it starts to come back on you and build up a lot of heat. You need to go in and then put that out, or cool it off, before you actually get down to what’s actually burning.

“You can talk about that all day long, but until you actually see it and see how it works, it’s not really going to be that effective.”

Thanks to the brave firefighters who go through year-round training to keep their skills sharp, Union County is a safer place to live.



Wooden pallets were used to simulate furniture that had caught fire inside the building.



Before the actual training began, firefighters took a walkthrough of the building and the scenarios they would be presented with that day.



Fire and smoke were used as training tools at Saturday’s event. Firefighters dressed in full turnout gear and wore Self-Contained Breathing Apparatuses into the training exercise.

According to Chief Dyer, the firefighters train so that “they’ll know the environment, they’ll know how to get into a fire faster, know how to put it out quicker, know how to put it out safer.”

“This is what we do – we fight fire,” said Chief Dyer. “The best way to do it in training is a controlled environment, and this is as controlled as we can get it.”

Toward the middle of the training session, one firefighter suffered adverse effects from the heat of the day and the training. He was airlifted to Northeast Georgia Medical Center, though his

condition improved to normal and he was released to go home Sunday.

In the last year, multi-company training has been a specific goal for all of the fire stations.

The next UCFD training session will take place in December, and will focus on the use of thermal imaging cameras, which are used to look inside buildings to find fire, to find people, to assist in finding people lost on the Appalachian Trail and more.

Chief Dyer would like people to know that the fire department is always looking for more volunteers, and

residents are free to call in or stop by Station No. 1 to pick up an application or find out more details.

In order to save lives, the brave men and women of the Union County Fire Department must often put their own lives in harm’s way.

Preparedness, then, becomes the best way to optimize everyone’s chances for survival in the most dangerous of circumstances.

And this is why Union County Fire Chief David Dyer routinely schedules training events for his full-time and volunteer firefighters.