

Firefighters, paramedics set to highlight extrication skills

Neil Pierson

Published: August 19th, 2009 06:00 AM

For about nine years, the Puyallup Extrication Team (PXT) has gone everywhere from Canada to Chicago and built a reputation as one of the best units in the business.

The PXT, comprised of firefighters and emergency medical technicians from Central Pierce Fire and Rescue and other area units, will be hosting 15 other squads from around the globe this week at The Pile Up in Puyallup, the 2009 international championship event for the Transportation Emergency Rescue Committee (TERC).

PXT President Jeff Pugh, a captain with Central Pierce and one of the extrication team's founding members in 2000, said Puyallup has hosted a regional event for TERC since 2004 but hosting an international competition is a much bigger honor that's largely based on PXT's success.

Eight American squads and eight more from Canada and Europe will be on hand as competition gets underway Wednesday, Aug. 19, at the South Hill Mall. The teams will vie for titles in smaller drills known as limited events, more complex drills known as unlimited events and an overall team crown. There will also be a separate, head-to-head drill in which teams try to pull live patients from smashed vehicles in 10 minutes or less.

Each team at this week's event is comprised of six members: An incident commander who sizes up the scenario, gives directions and coordinates backup efforts, a medic and four members who deploy various tools and stabilize victims.

In the limited scenarios, teams are given 20 minutes to use jacks, hacksaws and the infamous jaws of life to work on one or two vehicles.

"If you get the patient, it's icing on the cake," Pugh explained. "It's a nicety but not a necessity."

In the unlimited drills, Pugh said "the crashes are more horrific" and typically involve multiple vehicles and what may or may not be live patients.

Following the events, teams go into the "judges' chambers" to receive evaluations. Judges are carefully selected among experienced firefighters with extensive knowledge of extrication techniques, Pugh said.

PXT is comprised of Pugh, Kevin Williams, Mark Clayton, Charles Kemp, Ryan Taylor, Frank Naubert, Marc Beal, Chris Burdyshaw, Pat Lillie, Jeff Coffey, Ronnie Kent, Anthony John and Chris Lorenz.

PXT's education efforts started locally with units in Graham, Fort Lewis and Lakewood before branching outward. Today, the team travels throughout North America when its members are off duty and Pugh said the group has received numerous donations from companies who like what they see.

Pugh thinks events like The Pile Up in Puyallup raise awareness of the skills employed by fire and rescue personnel. He participated in four real-life extrications during a three-shift period last week.

"It's commonplace," Pugh said of extrications. "It's more common than fires."

Reach Reporter Neil Pierson at 253-841-2481 ext. 313 or by e-mail at neil.pierson@puyallupherald.com.

[The Herald](#) - "A part of East Pierce life for 100 years."

© 2008 Olympic Cascade Publishing, Inc.

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [About Our Ads](#) | [Copyright](#)

PHONE: 253.841.2481 | FAX: 840.8249

103 W. Stewart, Puyallup, WA

Send comments to the Editor at editor@puyallupherald.com