

# Post Office Haz-Mat Drill

by Battalion Chief Howard J. Hill and Battalion Chief John J. Fanning

In every area of the city, there are buildings or facilities that warrant on-site drills. These drills are a way to establish units' SOPs where complex operations might require out-of-the-ordinary procedures. Drills involving unique operations are a way to familiarize members with special units in the Department, such as Haz-Mat and Rescue units. Haz-Mat Operations and SOC often help in structuring drills involving procedures requiring special training, such as haz-mat operations and confined space rescues, high-angle rescues, etc. They also provide personnel to respond and operate at the drill. These kinds of drills offer an opportunity to interact with the public and enhance the FDNY's reputation.

Battalion 39's district consists mainly of low-income residential housing with some manufacturing occupancies. Within the district, there is a Post Office facility, located at 1050 Forbell Street, which consists of a complex of various buildings, fuel storage tanks and a 600,000-square-foot windowless building. The complex is entered through several gates and has a high-security profile. A hazardous substance release inside a large, windowless building potentially would cause considerable problems for the FDNY. For this reason, a hazardous material drill recently was conducted at the site.



photo 1



photo 2



photo 3



photo 4

*all photos courtesy  
BC Howard J. Hill*

The first step was to contact Division 15 to request permission to have units from the 39 Battalion put out of service for the drill. First-alarm units--Engines 225, 236 and 290, Ladders 103 and 107 and Battalion 39--were assigned to the location. They were out of service for two hours.

Next, postal management was contacted to see if they would permit a drill at the site. Maintenance Manager John Amatuccio agreed to let the FDNY use the facility. The entire building was evacuated. He welcomed the opportunity to familiarize his personnel with FDNY operations and ascertain if the emergency procedures of his personnel were appropriate for this kind of situation.

Battalion Chief John Fanning, Haz-Mat Operations, was contacted to schedule HMOPS units to respond to the drill. Chief Fanning enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity to participate. Battalion

Chief Charles Kasper, SOC, volunteered his help in coordinating the members of SOC, who would be at the drill and assist in the critique afterward. HMOPS notified EMS Command to ensure that their hazardous materials units would participate.

All parties agreed that two hours would provide a reasonable time frame for units to respond to the site, perform all necessary operations and conduct a critique. To schedule the necessary relocations into the area, the dispatcher was notified of the date and which Battalion 39 units would be out of service.

## Drill operations

Prior to the arrival of units, FDNY and postal drill observers were positioned throughout the area. As units responded into the complex, postal employees told them that a suspicious package was discovered that was leaking an unknown liquid. Haz-mat personnel had set up the package to ensure that first-arriving units would not be able to identify the substance (photo 1). Ladder 103, the first-arriving truck, wearing full protective gear, with their SCBA face pieces on, cautiously entered the area and made an investigation (photo 2). After finding the suspicious package, they made a visual examination, careful not to disturb or move it.

The package was leaking an unknown liquid, but no further identification was possible without moving the wrapping that covered the box. Ladder 103 notified Battalion 39, the Incident Commander on the scene, that a suspected hazardous material release was present and proceeded to tape off the area. Battalion 39 transmitted a 10-80 signal and special-called Haz-Mat Company 1 to respond to further investigate the contents of the broken box. (All special units were pre-staged in the complex.)

Engine 290 stretched a line to the loading dock area and remained outside, standing fast (photo 3). Engine 225 ensured a reliable water source and stretched a line to the building's sprinkler siamese. Ladder 107 taped off the entry area to the building and clearly marked the access with tape (photo 4). Engine 236 assisted in securing the area, preventing unauthorized entry.

Chief John Moran, Battalion 39, established a Command Post in an upwind, clear area, in proximity to the entry point. Postal supervisors and maintenance personnel were instructed to respond to the Command Post. All incoming units were informed of the Command Post location via the dispatcher (photo 5).

As expected, Squad 252, a Hazardous Materials Technician Unit (HMTU), arrived before Haz-Mat Company 1 (HMC1) because of their proximity to the incident location. (Note: HMC1 and the nearest available HMTU are assigned to all reported spills



photo 5



photo 6



photo 7



photo 8

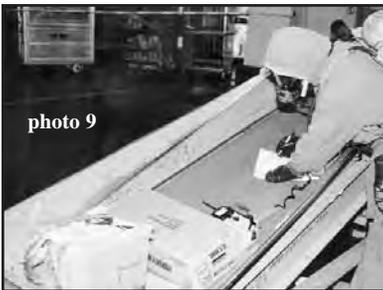


photo 9



photo 10



photo 11



photo 12

or releases of hazardous material.) Based on the information assessment of Ladder 103, the Squad entry team donned level “B” splash protection to safeguard themselves from the spilled liquid (photo 6).

Haz-Mat Operations procedure for unknowns requires a minimum survey for flammable vapors (LEL), radiological material and oxygen concentration (O2). To test for these conditions, the Squad entry team utilized their GX-91 for LEL and O2 and the Ludlum survey meter for radiation. The entry team also taped pH detector strips to the suit sleeve for easy access and use (photo 7). Corrosive vapors can severely damage the GX-91 detector. To prevent this, unknown materials (particularly liquids or their vapors) are tested for corrosiveness before using the GX-91.

Entry team procedures require turning on the members’ detection equipment in a known clean-air environment. They begin monitoring the moment they proceed to the release site. At a pre-determined point, they begin monitoring completely around the package or release to account for varying air currents.

As a survey circle is completed, they shorten the distance to the material in stages, completing several survey circles. This process continues until they reach pre-set alarm levels or they arrive at the package or release without detecting any material. Squad 252 did not detect any material release and members were able to unwrap some of the shipping paper, revealing the shipping labels (photo 8).

Whenever possible, because of the complexity of some chemical names and information, every attempt should be made to write down the data. A map indicating the location of the material is helpful for additional entry teams (photo 9). Before leaving the “Hot Zone,”

the initial entry team conducted a primary search for victims (photo 10). The entry team then proceeded to the taped-off access corridor, leading to the decontamination area. Following decon and doffing of their PPE, they were monitored for medical status and debriefed.

Upon arrival of HMC1, a meeting was held at the Command Post (picture 11) and information obtained by the Squad entry team was provided. This information included:

1. The DOT Hazard Class labels on the package
2. The UN four-digit number on the label
3. Shipping and return addresses
4. Information received from company representatives that might include technical data (photo 12)
5. Physical description of the liquid material (viscosity and color)
6. The readiness detected for flammability, radiological propensity and corrosiveness.

HMC1 personnel were able to research their database and make a presumptive identification of the material, based on the labels and UN number being accurate. They identified the primary hazard as flammable with respiratory irritation as a secondary hazard. They decided on structural fire-fighting gear with flash protection and SCBA for the PPE of choice (photo 13). A plan was established that included the following objectives:

1. Secure an unobstructed work space (photo 14).
2. Open the shipping container and access the inner contents (photo 15).
3. Contain any further release (photo 16).
4. Over-pack the secured container and all contaminated material (photo 17).
5. Monitor for any remaining vapors and vent if necessary.
6. Remove container to a secure outside area for removal by an approved contractor or the DEP (photo 18).

HMC1, with the necessary equipment and PPE to complete the plan, entered the “Hot Zone” and accomplished the objectives. FDNY and Haz-Mat Operations procedures require that all entries



photo 13



photo 14



photo 15



photo 16



photo 17



photo 18



photo 19



photo 20

into contaminated or possibly contaminated areas do not take place until a decontamination area is identified and established (photo 19). Squad HMTUs are the FDNY's primary resource for this function, but often are supplemented by EMSC/ERS Haz-Tac Technician units and members, especially when victims are involved (photo 20).

Once the package was contained and all necessary decontamination procedures completed, hose-lines were taken up and everyone moved to a room inside the building where a critique was held. The critique started with the first-arriving Ladder Company officer and members giving comments on their operations (photo 21). It then proceeded to include all members of the first-alarm companies. Chiefs Fanning and Kasper then gave their observations

units were updated. All in all, it was a very positive experience. The personnel at the postal facility were impressed with the capabilities and professionalism of the FDNY and were thankful to have an opportunity to test their emergency procedures.

HMOPS and SOC units had a chance to hone their skills and the field units were given a realistic, simulated haz-mat emergency to practice operations they normally do not perform. Chief Officers can rely on the help from HMOPS and SOC, as well as any other FDNY personnel to support them in organizing drills suitable for their particular area of the city. The public is well-served and the FDNY is seen as a proactive, professional organization. It's a win-win situation and well worth the effort.



photo 21



photo 22

and comments of the operations (photo 22). The critique provided a learning experience for all members involved and reinforced correct procedures. Postal employees were informed how their actions impacted on FDNY operations and the changes they needed to make to their emergency procedures. The critique took about 30 minutes from start to finish.

After the drill, the CIDS card was modified to reflect changes needed in the information given and the SOPs for Battalion 39

**About the Authors...**

**Battalion Chief Howard J. Hill** is a 27-year veteran of the FDNY and a third-generation FDNY firefighter. His current assignment is Battalion 39.

**Battalion Chief John J. Fanning (2)** is a 30-year veteran with the FDNY and Chief of Haz-Mat Operations. He has been assigned to Squad 5, TCU-712, Ladders 59 and 26, Haz-Mat Co. 1 and Engine 332. Additionally, he has served as Chief of Technical Services and Chief of Fleet Services. He is a task force leader for NY-TF1 and was deployed with the team to Oklahoma City, OK, and Puerto Rico. He also served on FEMA's Incident Support Team for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, GA.



**1st Division**

by FF Dan Potter, L-5



Hello, Brothers and Sisters. E-24 and L-5 wish the best of luck to **Lieutenant Jim "Rosie" Rosenberger** E-24 on his promotion to Captain. We are going to miss those therapy sessions...L-5 welcomes aboard **Lieutenant Tim O'Neill**...Memo to **FF Chris Cregin** L-5--even though you are on your rotation, it does not mean you have to eat everything on your plate to be polite...This will be the last issue of WNYF that **FF Dave Schleifer** L-5 will be reading on the job. He will be replacing it with *L.I. Fisherman*, now that he is headed off to retired life in Montauk. Good luck and best wishes to you from Sixth Avenue...Rumor has it that **FF Jay Butler** E-24 is a professor. Now that explains the "big head." **FF Ed "head" Foy** L-5 says he still is the undisputed "king of heads."...Was that **Lieutenant Mike Watchola** L-5 having a little trouble wearing his helmet at a recent drill?...E-24 welcomes **FF Edgar Hayes**...How come no one told **FF John Kelly** L-5 that sometimes you have to

# All Hands

work on the weekends?...L-20 wishes **FF Tony Fontana** L-20 good luck on his transfer from "Hell's Hundred Acres" to "Tonka Truck"...Congratulations to **FF Bob McMahon** L-20 and wife, Julie, on birth of their baby boy...SoHo Truck welcomes new probies, **FF Kevin Kromar** and **FF C.J. Jichetti**...Will someone explain the rules of the Department phone to **FF Bruce Beschner** L-20?...Hey, **FF Jim Gray** L-20. How is your neighbor? And, by the way, the Counseling Unit is on the third floor if you need it...Batcave, E-26, wishes good luck and a fond farewell to **FF John "rock and yell" Heffernan** E-26 on his transfer to L-11. **Lieutenant Kearney** E-26 wants all your instruments out of the firehouse...Brothers in the Batcave can't help but wonder if **Lieutenant Don "big red" Franz** E-26 and **FF Louie "jet black" Malizia** E-26 use the same hair dye products...Tigers are welcoming back **FF Tommy "no Squad for you" Holohan** E-6. Tough break for you, kid...New fall television show coming to you, "I, Me, Mine," focusing on **FF Eugene McKeon** E-6 and saga of kitchens, garbage and hair loss...Tigers'



outside "phone award" goes to **FF Kenny "AT&T" King** E-6...All are hoping that **FF Joe "homeless" Ricca** E-6 is enjoying his time at the in-laws' house...L-8 welcomes **FF Tommy Polanish**...**Captain Gialella** L-8 trying to make five out of four...Rumor at Club Ocho has **FF Hayes' L-8** family and kids moving in with **FF Kurt Bugge** L-8 because his house will be finished first...Cardiac unit called to North Moore Street for **FF Grady** L-8 and **FF Donnelly** L-8 after their last tour with the human chimney, **FF Tony Carracciolo** L-8...Good luck to **FF Brian Mulry** L-8 on his transfer to Harlem. You're getting a good man...**FF Timmy "nine toes" Hallahan** L-8 once again available for bathroom re-modeling...Congratulations to **Lieutenant Schmidt** L-9, **FF Oreggia** E-33 and senior man, **FF Lewis Muniz** L-9, on their retirements...Will **Lieutenant Schmidt** L-9 be red-shirted at Nassau Community College?...**FF Carl Oreggia** E-33 received the "fickle finger of fate" award...The kitchen won't be the same without the above three guys...Stork paid a visit to Great Jones Street--baby girls for **FF Paul Germann** E-33 and **FF Kevin**