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News Release

For Immediate Release

Structural Collapse Training for Specialized Rescues

The Springfield Fire Department is participating in structural collapse training during this week and next. This highly specialized training is the capstone course for an extensive training program for various specialized rescues including trench collapse rescues, rope rescues, and rescues from confined spaces. This course will teach the Department's technical rescue team the use of the equipment and the proper methods of rescuing people trapped in a building collapse. Instructors from the University of Missouri Fire and Rescue Training Institute are providing the training to the personnel.

In 2003, the Springfield Fire Department received a federal grant to fund much of the equipment required for structural collapse rescue. Various employees were sent to other urban areas to learn the techniques and then teach others within the Department. However, late last year, the Department received a \$73,000 grant through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to provide the necessary training in Springfield so all members of the Fire Department's technical rescue team could get first hand instruction from experienced instructors from other urban areas such as Kansas City and St. Louis.

According to Richard O'Connor, Chief of Special Operations, "While we have been fortunate to develop a basic level of capability with the resources available within the community, this type of equipment and training would simply not be possible without the Federal funding. In two weeks from now, we will be significantly more prepared for a disaster, big or small, that involves the need for our technical rescue team."

The Springfield Fire Department is a part of a tiered response system that is currently being developed through the Department of Homeland Security to provide these structural collapse capabilities across the region. The largest communities, such as Springfield, Joplin and Taney County are equipped and in the process of being trained to the highest level, capable of rescuing victims inside concrete and steel buildings. Moderate size communities, such as Battlefield, Nixa, Ozark, Bolivar, Aurora, Cassville, and Nevada are equipped and are being trained to a medium level, which are capable of rescuing victims inside wood-framed buildings such as homes. Several of the smallest communities, such as Purdy, Shell Knob, Forsyth, Ash Grove, and Lamar in the area are being trained and equipped to the lowest level of response capability, which are capable of rescuing lightly trapped victims.

While this initiative was started well before the Joplin event, many of the departments, including the Springfield Fire Department, provided significant assistance in response to the Joplin tornado. The full build out of the system is expected to take two more years, depending on funding availability.

For more information or photo/video opportunities, contact: Fire Chief David Hall, (417) 838-4730.