

'Explosion' lets crews hone skills

By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

FOR ALL practical purposes, it looked like a disaster. A natural gas pipe explosion had just ripped through a North Farmington High School chemistry lab. The 30 students and teacher lying across the floor were suffering from a myriad of injuries — chest wounds, severed limbs, head wounds, burns and cuts.

The Farmington Hills Fire Department arrived at the scene — on 13 Mile, east of Farmington Road — at 12:35 p.m., seven minutes after the explosion.

Paramedics from Fleet Ambulance (a division of Paramed Inc.) arrived five minutes later. Meanwhile, unsuspecting emergency room personnel at Huron Valley Hospital in Commerce Township were about to be alerted to incoming disaster victims.

Adding to the already disastrous scenario was a serious auto accident in Commerce Township involving five adults and an infant. Fortunately, at day's end, all victims — participants in a mock disaster drill — got off their guineys, wiped off the makeup, unwrapped their bandages and went home.

STAGED BY Huron Valley Hospital and Bloomfield Hills-based Fleet Ambulance, the drill was designed to help emergency response personnel assess their abilities to respond to disaster. Whether an explosion, tornado, fire or flood, an emergency is classified as a disaster when it involves 30 or more injured people.

"We were approached (to participate) through the ambulance company. We work field units while generating injuries for a hospital," said Lt. Tom Shurtleff of the Farmington Hills Fire Department. "It gives us the ability to know we can be organized to deal with

emergencies outside the scale of usual proportions.

"I think we learned a lot. We were well-organized. It showed us some glitches. All we're trying to do now is trying to improve."

Unlike hospital emergency personnel, the 18 participating firefighters were prepared for the disaster drill.

"We had a planned event. We determined to do that because this is the first time we have done this scale of exercise," Shurtleff said.

AT THE scene, Shurtleff was designated fire official in charge while a Fleet Ambulance paramedic was designated triage officer. A triage officer is not involved in treatment but ensures all victims are cared for in order of seriousness of injury. Paramedics stabilized victims, determined priority injuries and administered first aid.

"It's practice for all emergency agencies to pull together in the event of disaster," said Carol Loe, Paramed public relations director.

Disaster drills are required to be staged by hospitals to maintain accreditation through the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals.

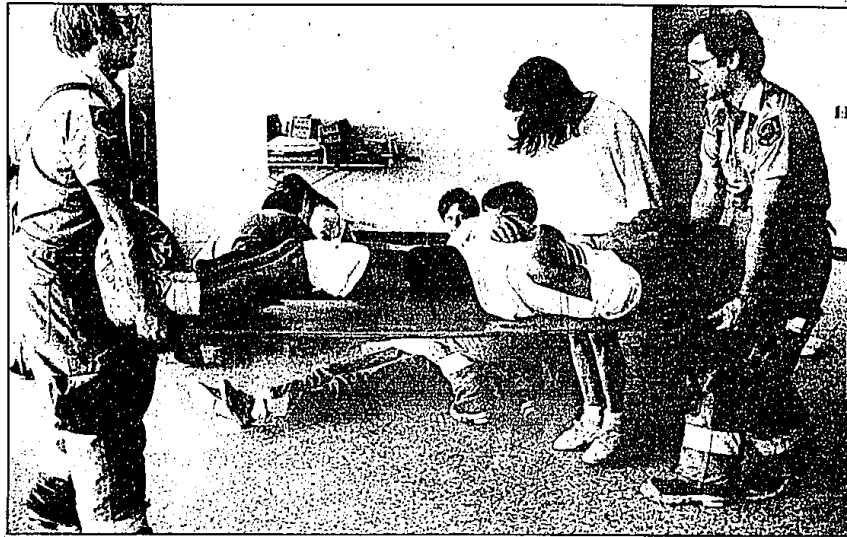
"Most hospitals and ambulance services all cooperate to put on these disasters," Loe said.

A communications officer called the Oakland County EMS Communication Coordination Center, which contacted neighboring hospitals to determine emergency capabilities, status of blood supplies and bed availability.

AN EXPLOSION was chosen for the drill because of the possible injuries that could result.

"We need multiple types of injuries. We aren't doing this just for gore. But every injury is treated in a certain way."

"So we have chemical burns, amputations, lacerations, head injuries," Loe said.



photos by RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Farmington Hills firefighters Ronald Sill (left) and Michael Garr tend to North Farmington High School student Matt Harmon (on stretcher). North student Megan Case (behind stretcher) portrays a worried family member.



Troy McCormick, a Fleet Ambulance paramedic, sorts out patients according to the severity of their injuries.



Dan Roy (left) and Don Johnson of M.T.S. Ambulance prepare to transport a patient from the mock disaster site to Huron Valley Hospital.

Half-mill for Farmington Hills parks and recreation capital improvement projects

Tuesday, June 24, 1986 — local precinct breakdown

| Precincts | Yes | No |
|---|--------------|------------|
| 1. Power Middle School | 9 | 24 |
| 2. Wheeler Fire Hall | 26 | 8 |
| 3. Woodcreek School | 19 | 7 |
| 4. Power Middle School | 4 | 4 |
| 5. William Grace School | 21 | 27 |
| 6. Larkshire School | 24 | 30 |
| 7. Dunckel Middle School | 25 | 22 |
| 8. East Middle School | 25 | 26 |
| 9. East Middle School | 15 | 4 |
| 10. Dunckel Middle School | 68 | 14 |
| 11. North Farmington High School | 79 | 32 |
| 12. East Middle School | 40 | 17 |
| 13. William Grace School | 11 | 5 |
| 14. Alameda School | 30 | 13 |
| 15. Gill School | 4 | 13 |
| 16. Fairview School | 13 | 19 |
| 17. Alameda School | 19 | 9 |
| 18. Lutheran High School | 29 | 19 |
| 19. Forest School | 60 | 35 |
| 20. Fire Headquarters | 26 | 19 |
| 21. Dunckel Middle School | 47 | 15 |
| 22. North Farmington High School | 49 | 12 |
| 23. Kenbrook School | 23 | 20 |
| 24. Independence Green Clubhouse | 6 | 7 |
| 25. Gill School | 38 | 17 |
| 26. Hope Lutheran Church | 20 | 10 |
| 27. Universalist Unitarian Church | 3 | 2 |
| Absentee voter ballots | 459 | 490 |
| Totals | 1,189 | 920 |
| Registered voters: 40,877; actual voters, 2,108; turnout percentage, 5.2 percent. | | |
| Vote counts are unofficial. | | |

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