

Disaster!

You would have thought a disaster was taking place: six homes burning out of control.

But it was part of the Farmington Hills Fire Department's training schedule using abandoned homes for practice.

On Sunday, Jan. 17, the Farmington Hills Fire Department, along with the Farmington Department of

Public Safety, staged a live disaster drill using homes slated for demolition on Stanbury and Bramwell in Farmington Hills.

The homes, vacated to make way

for a hotel and office development, were donated to the fire department for practice.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to simulate a realistic disaster," said Fire Chief Richard Marinucci.

"It gives the department and its personnel an opportunity to practice individual fire-fighting skills, as well as develop a management technique called 'Incident Command'."

Through the incident command system, an incident commander can organize and implement a plan to mitigate whatever disaster his organization may be faced with in the field. Included in the exercise were personnel and equipment from the City of Farmington, 10 fire trucks and 55 fire fighters participated in the Jan. 17 exercise.

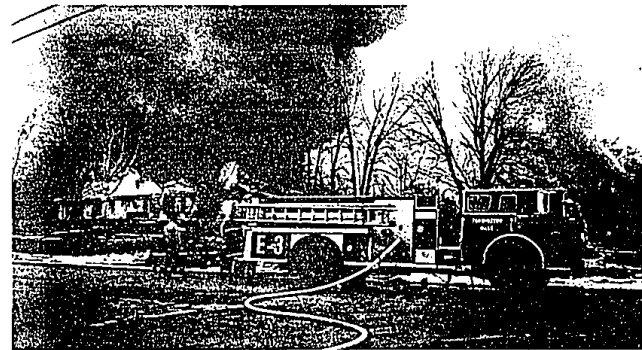
In cases where a large-scale incident exceeds the capability of an organization a mutual aid agreement allows cities to use the others' resources.

"You can never be fully prepared for the extraordinary incident," said Deputy Chief Peter Baldwin, "so you develop your resources outside your system, in case you are faced with a disaster beyond your capabilities."

Information collected from the drill will be analyzed so that the department's performance can be

evaluated and additional guidelines can be developed.

"It is our hope that through this valuable exercise we can benefit from the lessons learned and be better prepared to face any disaster which we may face. The citizens rely on our capabilities and the department's responsibility is to be prepared," Baldwin said.



photos by PETER BALDWIN

At right: Fire Lt. John Trafalet observes one of the burning garages.



This pumper is being used to supply attack crews at three of the burning houses.

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