

It's only a drill: Godfrey Fire Protection District tests their hazmat readiness Monday morning

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - The Godfrey Fire Protection District is one of only four departments in Madison County with a special hazmat engine.

That engine and the training of its firefighters were put to the test Monday morning during a drill. The details of that drill were kept secret from everyone except the people

planning it and Godfrey Fire Protection Chief Erik Kambarian. Kambarian said each of the department's three shifts take part in a drill each year. This year, first shift, which includes Godfrey firefighter and Madison County HazMat Team member Jake Elder, participated in a drill to deal with an unknown hazardous material.

"We recently became a department with a hazmat engine," Kambarian said Tuesday morning. "We have one, Alton has one, Edwardsville has one and Collinsville has one. We were given the additional equipment to respond to hazardous materials calls before the team arrives. The drill was an absolute success. There are of course things we should work on, and ways we could have done better, but overall, it was a success."

The scenario behind the drill was an automobile collision involving a passenger vehicle striking a tanker truck, which began leaking an unknown chemical. During the drill, firefighters were tasked with rescuing a motorist in the car while also identifying and mitigating the hazardous material. Only Kambarian and the rest of the drill's planners knew the identity of the hazardous agent.

"It was a toxic pesticide used throughout the area," Kambarian said of the simulated substance.

No one was exposed to the toxic substance during the drill.

Firefighters were able to don their MT94 Lion Suits - two of which were provided to the Godfrey Fire Protection District by the Madison County HazMat Team. Kambarian said the coveralls were designed for weapons of mass destruction use, and allows wearers to be able to move about freely. Kambarian said wearers could even play basketball in the suit.

In order to properly execute Monday morning's drill, both Bauer's Towing and Trickey's Towing worked to tow a tanker donated to Lewis and Clark Community College by Werts Welding and Tank Service and turn it on its side Monday morning on Ryan Drive. Kambarian said the department would like to thank each of the organizations involved in assisting with the drill.