



# Schrage, Sweetman show importance of training with heroic efforts in retention pond

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
February 14 2019 12:30 PM





**EDWARDSVILLE** - Edwardsville firemen spend hours through the year training for life-threatening situations that arise in their profession.

Edwardsville firefighters Cole Schrage and Jake Sweetman demonstrated the importance of that preparation in what many would view as a heroic way on Wednesday morning. A driver was trapped after their vehicle spun into a retention pond near Gateway Commerce Center Drive around 8:30 a.m. Wednesday when Edwardsville Fire Department received the call. The first responders were on the scene quickly and hydraulic cutter/spreaders, known as “The Jaws of Life” paired with two well-trained firefighters in ice and cold water rescue were the difference in a trapped person’s life.

Sweetman and Schrage both have a high regard for their training and Deputy Chief James Whiteford said one thing that they remembered before jumping into the frigid water was their safety gear.

“Fundamentally, two things went right and enabled them to get in and do the rescue,” Deputy Chief Whiteford said. “First is the training we do. We train on ice and cold water regularly. Three weeks ago, each shift went through having practice and a hands-on skill set, which is something you have to do. I am real proud of the guys for staying up on training and keeping their skills up to speed.

“The other thing is their discipline. They could have hurried up and not put on a protection suit. They didn’t realize the victim was trapped. It took an extra minute to put on the safety gear to handle it, but it really made the difference in the case. We had to pry the door open when we got the victim out. I am pretty proud of these guys and all our firefighters. They are all talented and dedicated.”

The name Sweetman is well-known among first responders in the area. Brad Sweetman is a battalion chief with the Alton Fire Department. Jake and Tanner, his sons, are both on the Edwardsville Fire Department.

“Both Jake and Tanner definitely have been exposed their whole lives to firefighting and are familiar with the concepts,” Deputy Chief Whiteford said. “I am sure their dad is very proud of both of them.”

