



Bob Kaltenbach of the Brookfield Fire Department monitors the vital signs of a non-responsive drug overdose mannequin-victim while Michael Visauer (center) of the Franklin Fire Department intubates the patient and Pete Oleniczak (right) of the Waukesha Fire Department administers chest compressions during a March 12 paramedic advanced cardiac life support training sequence at the Brookfield Fire Department.

NOW Photo by C.T. Kruger

HOME schooled

Intensive paramedic training helps
Fire Department, city's coffers

By **ALAN HAMARI**
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Class is back in session at the Brookfield Fire Department.

For the first time since 2006-07, the Brookfield Fire Department's accelerated-schedule paramedic training class is full, allowing the city to bring in extra revenue and provide in-house training to its employees.

A dozen students from across Waukesha County — including three members of the Brookfield Fire Department — are enrolled in the class, which started in mid-January and runs until June.

Fire Chief Charlie Myers said the program provides a lot of positives to the department. "It's been very beneficial," he said.

Class is open to county

The class started in 2000-01 and was originally intended to provide paramedic training to fire department members. But interest from surrounding communities allowed the program to expand, and now it draws participants from across Waukesha County, said Judy Larsen, the Brookfield Fire Department's EMS coordinator.

Enrollment had dipped in recent years after **Waukesha County Technical College** launched its own two-year fire safety degree program, but the city was able to fill the 12-student class this year.

National standards mandate that paramedics

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receive at least 1,000 hours of training, including a minimum of 400 hours of classroom instruction and 600 hours in "patient care areas" like hospitals, Larsen said. The students are then assigned to a licensed paramedic unit in their community, where they answer 911 calls are required to make at least 50 patient contacts.

"We try very hard to avoid any sitting-around-twiddling-your-thumb time," Larsen said.

After 16 weeks in the classroom and 11 weeks in the field, the students are eligible to take the National Registry of Emergency Technicians exam.

Alternative to WCTC program

Myers said the city's training program is not competing with the programs at Waukesha County Technical College because the city's program is geared toward departments that "want to have their people at that paramedic level."

Larsen said the Waukesha County Technical College program is aimed toward those students who can't spend five months in an accelerated training course. Students in the city's class spend most of their days in the classroom and are expected to spend one to two hours studying for every hour they spend in class.

Revenues help city

With the nine non-Brookfield employees in the class this year, the training program will bring in \$54,000 for the city, about \$30,000 more than city made from a smaller class in



NCW Photo by C.T. Kruger

More than 14 weeks of training goes into a paramedic's education to prepare a firefighter to administer advanced life saving techniques, including the ability to administer a variety of drugs at the scene.

2008.

With three vacancies in this year's class, the city also was able to train three members of the fire department in house instead of enrolling them in another training program, Myers said.

Myers said sending department members out to another training course would be "far more expensive" than doing it in-house.

Paramedics in demand

Demand is expected to stay steady in the class, too.

More and more, fire departments across the state are turning toward paramedic-level service on their ambu-

lances, meaning departments will continue to seek training opportunities, Myers said.

"As departments move toward paramedic level (service), what they're trying to do is have a paramedic on every ambulance," he said.

And a paramedic license can open a lot of doors, Larsen said. She said everyone from hospitals to insurance companies is hiring paramedics these days.

"The license itself, although intended to be customarily 911 (response) calls, has really branched out," Larsen said.

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