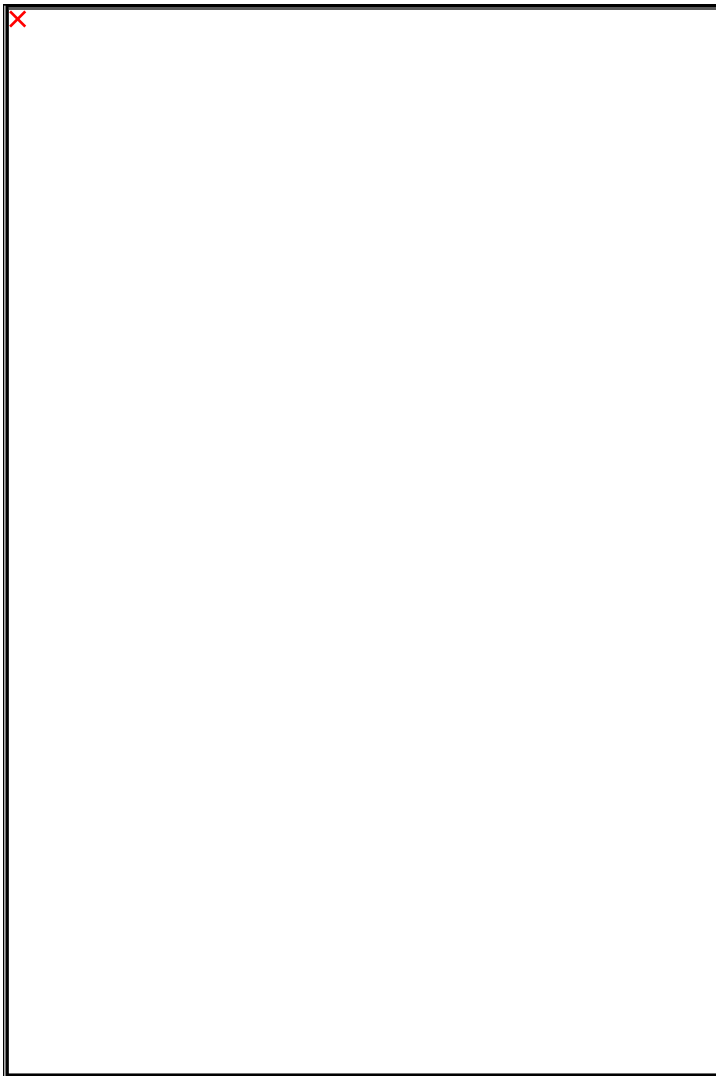


# Carlisle Barracks Fire Fighters conduct fire training with DOD counterparts

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*By Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos, USAWC Public Affairs*

A burning building is terrifying. It is painfully hot. Stuff can fall on you and you can't see or breathe well. It is an exercise in claustrophobia. Fortunately, there are people who will go into fire-engulfed buildings and are trained to and fight fires and rescue trapped people.



**A Carlisle Barracks fire fighter enters a burning room during a live fire exercise on July 1.**

To make sure that they can respond in a timely efficient manner, fire fighters, like Soldiers, train as they fight. For fire fighters this means live fire exercises.

On June 28<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup> the Carlisle Barracks fire department conducted joint live fire training with local first responders at the Harrisburg Community College Shumaker Public Safety Center for Live Structural Fire Training.

Gone are the days when, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, different fire departments fought with and sabotaged each other to determine who would put out a fire, now they work together, both out of necessity and comradeship.

“It is nice to get a chance to train together,” said Chief Leonard Rutter, Deputy Chief of the DLA fire department. “You never know when you will have to rely on each other.”

“We are a small department and there is only so much we can teach ourselves,” added fire fighter Todd Hooper, who has been with the Carlisle Barracks fire station for two years. “Working with other departments helps us learn new tricks of the trade.”

“The Department of Defense mandates that we conduct live fire training once a year,” said Tom Rigling, the training officer for the DLA fire department. “Like Soldiers who constantly train to keep their skills sharp, we have to do that too, so this training helps. We are all small departments, so joint training gives us more bang for the buck.”

The three stations frequently have to rely on each other because they have a mutual aid agreement between not only the military fire departments, but the civilian ones as well.

“If a department in Cumberland County has an emergency, we will respond if needed,” said Carlisle Barracks Station Chief Dennis Ing. “For example, if there is a HAZMAT emergency in the county, we will come out because we are the only station in the area that has 100 percent HAZMAT technician certification.” HAZMAT technician certification means the fire fighters are qualified to go into a HAZMAT zone and remove the hazardous material.

In the event of a real emergency, the first department on the scene will assess the situation and then call for back up if needed, said Henry Hoffman, the DLA fire chief.

“We have enough people to arrive on the scene and get started but we rely on each other for help.”

The fire fighters trained on fighting fires in two different types of physical structures; a commercial building and a residential dwelling. Each type of building has different problems for the fire fighters to tackle.

“In a commercial building there are usually limited windows and entry ways, which makes entering the building more difficult,” said Hooper, who has been a fire fighter for 16 years. “Unfortunately that means the fire can get quite hot.”

House fires are difficult because not all houses are the same.

“You are kind of behind the eight ball when you go into a house fire because you don’t know how the rooms are set up,” said Mike Diffendall Jr. a fire fighter with the Defense Logistics Agency. “Of course the biggest concern in a house fire, is, is everyone out of the building and accounted for. When I hear that the family is safe, my adrenaline goes down a little, because now it is just an attack mission not a search and rescue mission.”

When a fire team encounters a house fire there are four different teams that tackle the problem. The ventilation team opens up holes in the house to let out the smoke, the search team looks for people trapped inside while the fire attack team works to put out the fire. Standing by is the Fire fighter Assist and Search Team (FAST) also known as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT). These fighters are there to rescue any fire fighter that is in distress.

“They are the emergency crew for the emergency crew,” said Rutter.

While the fires they trained on were real, the departments did keep safety on their mind. They used dry wood to feed the fire which burns slower and lower than gasoline, which used to be used. “Gas burns hotter and produces more flame which was occasionally resulting in injuries” said Rigling. “Wood doesn’t produce as much flame but does produce more smoke which makes moving around inside the building more difficult.”

The training, which was sponsored by the Defense Logistics Agency’s New Cumberland fire department, teamed up members of the Mechanicsburg Army Depot fire department and the Carlisle Barracks fire department.

The Carlisle Barracks Fire Department will conduct more training on post later this month.