

# Extrication drill keeps firefighters sharp for real emergency

By Kathryn Reed

By the time firefighters were done, it looked like a wrecking yard at the end of Lodi Avenue. Mangled vehicles littered the pavement that in winter is used by Caltrans crews as snow storage.

“It gave guys a chance to cut the doors off, roofs off and all the normal stuff we do in a good vehicle wreck to get to patients. They pushed the dash out to make room for people’s legs,” explained Tyler Jack, South Lake Tahoe firefighter.



South Shore  
firefighters  
practice  
extrication  
drills.

Photos/Tyler  
Jack

As the department’s vehicle extrication specialist, Jack arranged for the three days of training last week for South Lake Tahoe, Lake Valley, U.S. Forest Service and CalFire crews.

The 25 vehicles provided by individuals, Emerald Bay Towing and Welcome's Auto Body looked drivable at the beginning of the day. By the end of the exercise they were reduced to a mass of metal.

Realistic scenarios rescue personnel could encounter in the Lake Tahoe Basin were staged – including creating a rock cropping as though a vehicle had gone over Echo Summit or Emerald Bay.

An old BlueGo bus was tilted on its side for firefighters to practice rescuing large numbers of people at once.

Everyone being trained sat through a three-hour PowerPoint to learn about new vehicles and the various safety restraint systems. With airbags being in different locations, this is something rescue personnel need to understand before they are at the accident scene.

The group earned two certificates – continuing education units and a state fire marshal one that can be put toward firefighter 1 and firefighter 2 designations.

Jack is working on creating a larger training exercise next year for departments throughout California and Nevada that could involve cutting up 90 vehicles.

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