

SLT crews demonstrate extrication intricacies



South Lake Tahoe firefighters demonstrate extricating a person from a vehicle is complicated. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

A woman sat slumped in the driver's seat. The car a heap of metal. There was no way to get to her without removing the door and roof of the vehicle.

What seemed like an inordinate amount of time passed before she was loaded onto a litter board.

It's not easy work to extricate someone from a mangled car. That was proven by South Lake Tahoe firefighters as they demonstrated the process to City Council members and others.

Each department head is tasked with presenting to the electeds – and public – what it is their employees really do. Not all will be as visual as what Fire Chief Jeff Meston delivered.



Tools of the trade.

Firefighters used this as an actual training for what it would be like to respond to a car crash where the driver is unresponsive and stuck inside. Besides injured people, the crew was concerned about fire and leaking hazardous materials.

Their safety is of utmost importance so the necessary gear must be put on before the work begins. Hoses are brought from the trucks. A variety of tools were needed to cut through the metal. It was a team approach to dealing with each aspect of the rescue.

Paramedics do what they can for the driver. A neck brace is put around her while still in the vehicle, other care is provided as well as the firefighters work to free her from could have been a metal tomb.

Being such a small city, most of the department's resources are deployed to a serious crash. At the demonstration – just like if this were a real accident – Tahoe Douglas and Lake Valley fire departments back up city personnel.

“We use up all of our resources on a pretty regular basis,” Meston told the council. “No agency is able to do their own

thing.” Mutual aid is what saves everyone in the basin.

Meston said California has the most sophisticated mutual aid system in the world.