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## Simulator gives true-to-life training in tough situations

**BY BRIANNE DOPART**

Imagine crawling through a 24-foot long, 20-inch wide culvert. It's hot, it's dark and only remotely can you make out the sound of friends cheering you on.

Thirteen members of the Durham Fire Department and one member of the Chapel Hill Fire Department tried their hand at working in confined spaces Wednesday with the help of a piece of equipment that helps them do just that.

Veteran firefighter and former Shearon Harris power plant fire technician Connie Beasley said he realized firefighters' need for true-to-life training equipment during his tenures as a volunteer firefighter and a technician at Progress Energy.

Beasley started Triple C Fire and Rescue Training Services in 1998, seven years after designing his first "confined-space simulator." He built his current model, a 35-foot trailer, in 2000. His initial simulator, built in 1986, was "two boxes and a pickup," he joked. His later model, built in 1991, was constructed from a horse trailer.

Durham Technical Community College, which has taken steps to better its training partnership with the Durham Fire Department this year, brought Beasley and his simulator to the Durham Fire Department's Administrative Offices.

Captain Bobby Boening said it was the best way for Durham firefighters to train in an environment most like the environment they would experience in an actual emergency.

The trailer can be rotated to stand vertically or horizontally and has four separate compartments, the first of which is a maze that engulfs students in total darkness. The second compartment, a silo with eight-foot tapered walls and a 20-inch entryway, simulates emergencies like those that could occur in a well or culvert.

At Wednesday's training session, firefighters crawled down a 24-foot crawl space and "rescued" a 175-pound dummy nicknamed "Rescue Randy."

While Boening said Durham firefighters have been "fortunate enough" not to have to deal with any situations like the ones simulated in Beasley's trailer, he said it's great training for anyone passionate about being in a rescue role.

"If you can do this, you can probably do anything in the real world," he said.