

# Realistic exercise at MCC hones first responder skills

## 'Cops'-type scenarios give firefighters a chance to react to simulated crisis conditions

By Diana Whittle

First responders honed their skills by reacting to a variety of incidents during a recent exercise organized by the faculty at Mesa Community College.

They used mock patient-management scenarios that were realistic enough to give an episode of "Cops" a run for its money.

Volunteer actors played the parts of the injured and wore makeup to look as though they were really wounded, explained Dawn Zimmer, media relations coordinator for MCC.

The training exercise was at the Virtual Incident Command Center in Mesa.

"We had a great collaborative effort between our faculty, the Tempe Fire Department and Scottsdale Healthcare," said Zimmer.

"It provided the most comprehensive learning experience possible for the participants, who included both students and professionals."

This is the second annual exercise at MCC, which involves "moulage"—the art of applying mock injuries with make-up for training purposes. This portion is coordinated by the Theater and Film Arts program at the college, whose faculty member Mallory Prucha is also the costume shop coordinator.

Prucha worked with the volunteers on acting the appropriate part for their assigned scenarios.

"Students from the theater and film arts programs have been inspired by the work of the paramedic students, and also know that the skills they are learning during the exercise have a broader reach and implications beyond the walls of the classroom and theater," said Prucha.

Prucha worked with Sean Newton, the occupational program director of MCC's paramedic and fire science programs, to create 12 scenarios that mimic situations responders may encounter and need to react to in an instant.

Examples included a self-inflicted gunshot wound; a patient with chest discomfort; a burn victim; a drowning child; and a person who just had a seizure.

Many of the calls to fire stations involve emergency medical care, and it's important for the firefighters to have an emergency medical technician on every shift, explained Newton.

This type of exercise also was performed at the Mesa Fire Training facility and in conjunction with Mesa Fire, as part of an anti-drunken-driving campaign, also known as Mock Crashes, which is presented each semester at local high schools, says Newton.

"Tempe Fire has consistently utilized MCC to train their members as paramedics since 2009. Currently we employ many Tempe firefighters as

parttime adjunct faculty members and allied health tutors in our EMS and Fire Science programs.

"In addition, Tempe Fire loaned additional EMS equipment to help logistically with this event," said Newton.

Next year, Newton would like to expand the exercise to include law enforcement officers in the scenarios, in order to make the exercises even closer to real life.

"I would love to have either Tempe or Mesa PD get involved with us, and I plan on extending an invitation to both agencies and ask them to participate in our future planning meetings."

As for the participants in the exercise, Newton says that the EMT, paramedic and nursing students agree the training is invaluable as they prepare to enter their chosen fields.

"They could not believe how realistic and challenging every scenario was. They are very appreciative to the college for providing such a high degree of training in order to ensure their success after graduation," said Newton.

"Our focus is to continue to develop and to enhance this experience to make sure we are doing all we can to provide the best and most realistic training possible."



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