

Collier firefighters get realistic training at country club buildings soon to be replaced

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Firefighters from the North Collier Fire & Rescue District simulate a fire rescue scenario at a soon-to-be torn building at the Quail Creek Country Club on Nov. 30, 2018. Jake Allen, jake.allen@naplesnews.com; 239-213-6042



(Photo: Alex Driehaus/Naples Daily News)
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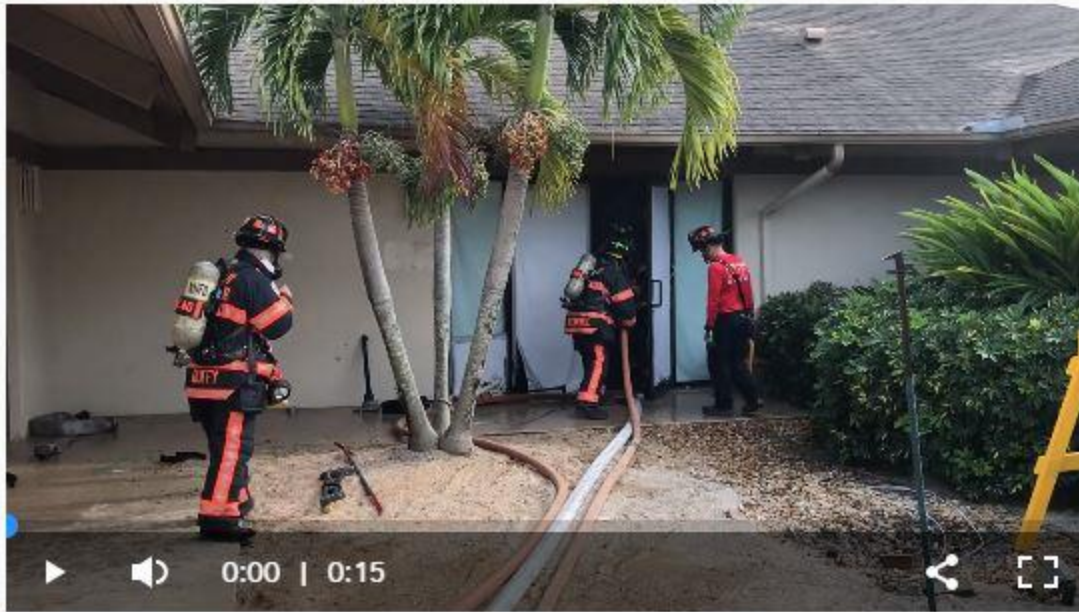
Real smoke and fake flames on a digital panel filled the darkened pro shop, tennis center and fitness center buildings at the Quail Creek Country Club on Thursday as Collier County firefighters simulated a search and rescue mission.

The buildings at the country club in northern Collier County are to be torn down in December for redevelopment.

The North Collier Fire Control & Rescue District has led training scenarios using the buildings twice a day for the past two weeks, excluding Thanksgiving.

"We run this completely like a real call," said Michael Jimenez, battalion chief of training with the North Collier fire district. "We have command, we have dispatch that comes in. We try to keep it as real as possible."

The digital panel has sensors and firefighters have to spray water on it correctly during the training scenarios, Jimenez said.



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In addition to firefighters from North Collier, all the fire districts in Collier County were invited to participate.

Firefighters from the Greater Naples Fire Rescue District and the Marco Island Fire-Rescue Department have participated in some of the sessions so far, Jimenez said.

"None of the districts are big enough to handle fires of this size on their own," Jimenez said. "We would call mutual aid to come in and assist us."

"If we start working together in training, then we know what equipment they have, versus what we have."

Wendy Felsinger, director of communications and marketing at the country club, said, "We were really happy to help, and the buildings are going to be torn down anyway. It's a great way to give back to the fire department."

The buildings used during the training will be replaced by one large building with a spa and golf, tennis and fitness centers, Felsinger said.

The training scenario included a man working inside the building and starting a fire, then running out. Firefighters had to go into the dark buildings, put out the flames and look for victims stuck inside, Jimenez said.



Lt. Nick Stolts instructs Jeff Green and Nick Currao on how to enter a building through a high ground floor window during a training scenario conducted by the North Collier Fire Control & Rescue District on Friday, Nov. 30, 2018, at Quail Creek Country Club in northern Collier County. (Photo: Alex Driehaus/Naples Daily News)

The training also included a scenario in which a firefighter gets into trouble inside the structure and must be rescued.

“If a mayday gets called by someone not in our department, we need to know what we need to bring in to get them out,” Jimenez said. “Us coming together and collaborating on training is something we need to do more often.”

Training at buildings in the community with real smoke is much closer to the real rescues than training at a fire station using a simulator, Jimenez said.

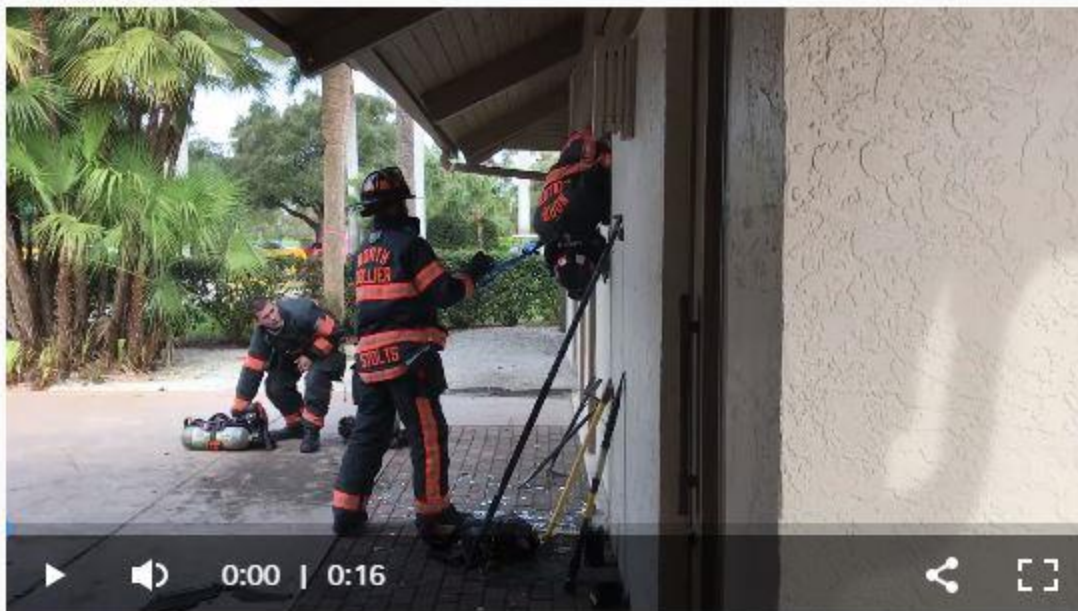
To make the training seem as real as possible curtains were used to black out the windows inside the country club buildings. Then a smoke machine and mannequins, to simulate victims, were placed inside.

Firefighters also practiced escaping the building through a window and cutting holes in the roof to allow ventilation, Jimenez said.

Three to six trucks with firefighters aboard participated in each session, Jimenez said.

Samantha Czaplewski, the communications supervisor with the Collier County Sheriff's Office, said the training is beneficial for dispatchers as well.

"It's important for us to see the other side of it and get a better perspective," Czaplewski said. "It helps us be better dispatchers. When we are sitting there in a controlled environment, we don't see everything they are doing. It gives a better perspective."



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