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Dufferin firefighters receive hands-on training with the Ontario Fire College?s mobile unit

By Paula Brown, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Firefighters in Dufferin County participated in hands-on simulated training to help prepare them for unique scenarios and keep their skills top-notch.

The Ontario Fire College's Mobile Fire Training Unit was stationed at the Shelburne & District Fire Department from July 12 to July 15 as part of a four-day training opportunity for local firefighters.

?We use mutual aid all the time within the County, so for us to bring other departments here and train together is invaluable, especially because live fire training is few and far between,? said Shelburne & District Fire Chief Dave Pratt. ?When you're on a scene, you know the other departments, so it makes it a lot more harmonious when doing those calls.?

The Ontario Fire College Mobile Live Fire Training Unit is a portable simulator that allows for various scenarios in firefighter training. The walls within the unit are movable, allowing the layout of the simulation to change depending which door the firefighters enter through.

The unit utilizes controlled burns with propane to create realistic fire conditions, including flames, heat, and limited visibility due to smoke, which allows firefighters to practice essential skills in a safe and controlled environment.

The first Mobile Live Fire Training Unit was launched in November 2021, followed by a second unit in early 2022. In 2023, the provincial government announced funding for two additional Mobile Live Fire Training Units, which would be utilized to better protect northern communities.

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, who served as Solicitor General when the training units were launched, attended the Saturday simulation training session. She was presented with an honorary fire chief's helmet from Chief Pratt and the local fire department.

?It's pretty cool to see it here in Dufferin-Caledon. Being able to transfer how we provide training for firefighter across Ontario, bringing it to their crews, to their departments is a really exciting way to make sure that they have the most up to date, safest training available,? said Jones.

While the simulation unit was in Shelburne, the departments planned to run various simulations, such as basic structural firefighting with hose advancement and extinguishing the fire. Other training scenarios included basement fires, second-floor window access and search, and "vent, enter, isolate and search."

?The plan is to make it as realistic as we can,? said Pratt.

Pratt told the Free Press that between 60 and 80 local firefighters from departments in Shelburne, Mulmur/Melanchthon, Rosemont, Grand Valley and Orangeville used the mobile facility for training.