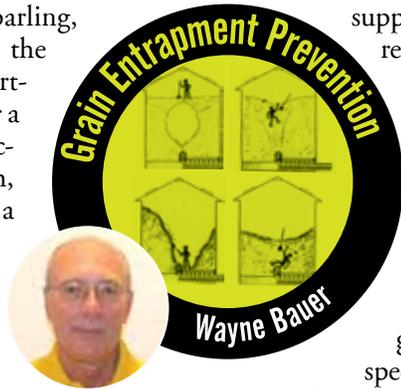


# Regional Emergency Response

## GRAIN INDUSTRY NEEDS TO PARTNER WITH LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

My friend David Sparling, who is deputy chief of the North Huron Fire Department and coordinator for a regional Emergency Services Training Centre in Blyth, ON, Canada, wrote a very thought-provoking article in January 2005 titled "Welcome to the Future." The complete article will be available on the Internet after Jan. 1, 2011, at [www.fdnh.ca](http://www.fdnh.ca).

In this article, David shared how the role of local volunteer fire departments have gone through a significant transformation from simply fighting fires or fire



suppression to providing rescue services for any situation that may arise.

How does a small volunteer group whose firefighters have full-time day jobs and shrinking budgets provide broad-spectrum rescue services for a variety of issues? These include grain entrapments, trench collapse, wilderness rescue, high-angle rescues, hazardous materials, structural collapse, water and ice rescue, cutting traffic victims out of hybrid cars, ter-

rorism, and other types of incidents.

Contrary to what OSHA in the United States or the Ministry of Labor in Canada suggest, these small local groups will do their best to rescue someone in their local jurisdictions, even if they may not be trained or equipped adequately to do so. It is not realistic to tell a neighbor or friend who is dying that he or she may have to wait one or two hours for a competent rescue team to arrive, and that you must refrain from lending any type of assistance.

These local fire departments have become broad-spectrum emergency

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*How does a small volunteer group whose firefighters have full-time day jobs and shrinking budgets provide broad-spectrum rescue services for a variety of issues?*

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response service groups, while their numbers and budgets have been shrinking. We need a larger base of resources from which to draw, in order to provide specialized services to our communities, as David points out.

### Combined Resources

Here's what David has to say about gathering these resources.

"Across a county or region, sufficient resources are likely available to provide technical rescue/hazmat services. If you were to take a handful of firefighters from each department and make a regional team for trench collapse rescue, confined space rescue, hazardous materials, etc., I am sure you could build a surprisingly effective crew.

"Because these teams would be regional, they would obviously increase

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the odds of using their skills. Let's be honest – who wants to train for years and never use it? But it also means you could keep dedicated, specialized crews trained without their volunteer commitment looking like a career department.

“Many departments have a tendency to find fault with or reasons not to work with neighboring departments or even neighboring stations within the same department. Those days have to end.

“Now more than ever, we need a larger base of resources from which to draw to service our communities. Volunteer stations of 20 to 30 firefighters cannot keep up with all of the training needed to meet these technical rescue challenges adequately, and quite frankly,

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*In terms of providing emergency response teams for grain entrapment incidents on farm and around commercial off-farm facilities, we need to look at creating regional or county emergency rescue response teams for these specialized types of emergency incidents.*

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they shouldn't be expected to. Additionally, these are low-volume calls, and it would be difficult to justify numerous stations purchasing and maintaining proper equipment.

“The concept: A couple of firefighters are selected from each station, maybe based on training, aptitude, or interest, to become part of a regional response team. If your pager goes off for a technical rescue/hazmat call, your regional team is activated, and a regional support vehicle responds from a centrally located fire hall. Properly trained and equipped crews arrive to handle the incident, with the first responding department providing support.

“In this situation, everyone wins. The victim gets qualified rescuers, the responding firefighters don't unduly jeopardize their lives, and perhaps, by working together with firefighters from various departments in your region,

some of those outdated rivalries will start to fade into memory.”

### Regional Teams

In terms of providing emergency response teams for grain entrapment incidents on farm and around commercial off-farm facilities, we need to look at creating regional or county emergency rescue response teams for these specialized types of emergency incidents. We need to look at forming a partnership between industry and local volunteer

fire departments.

These regional or county grain entrapment teams, in our case, may consist of eight to 12 people. Half may come from industry and half from local fire departments.

We cannot expect every local volunteer fire department to establish a six- to eight-person high-angle emergency response team for this type of specialized endeavor. However, we should make every attempt to identify six to eight firefighters spread out across the region who may be willing ►

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*Grain facilities and local volunteer fire departments can gain by sharing resources, training, and equipment for specialized rescue services such as grain entrapments.*

to train a couple of times a year with six to eight elevator employees in the same area.

You may wish to ask each grain elevator in the area involved to kick in \$1,000 or \$1,500 each for seed money

for the purchase of rescue equipment and training. This is the approach we took initially in the Thumb area of Michigan in 1999, which developed into the Grain Entrapment Prevention Initiative, with training offered every

June in Frankenmuth, MI.

This same type of approach now is taking form in areas like Blyth and Hensall, ON; the northwest corner of Ohio; and the Cherokee Strip area of Oklahoma.

Your local GEAPS chapter and/or state grain and feed association may be helpful in assisting this type of worthy endeavor.

### **Obligation Remains**

Bottom line, our numbers are shrinking, but someone still needs to answer that emergency 9-1-1 call in a timely manner. Who will answer that grain entrapment call in your area?

Make sure your 9-1-1 dispatcher knows who these people are, and where local fire departments can locate rescue equipment in your area. This Regional Emergency Rescue Response Team should be on the contact or resource list of your 9-1-1 dispatcher, county emergency director, and local fire department chiefs.

*Wayne Bauer is safety and security director of Star of the West Milling Co., Frankenmuth, MI; 989-652-7026.*

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