



## Training the Fire Service for a New Day at COD



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My career started in 1988 as a volunteer/paid-on-call EMT-A for the Plainfield (Ill.) Ambulance Department. In 1990, I was hired full-time by the Darien-Woodridge Fire District (Darien, Ill.). During my career, I held the rank of lieutenant and was appointed EMS Coordinator. A duty injury forced me off the job in 2010. I have been an EMS Instructor for College of DuPage since 1991, and assisted in the development of the advanced EMS classes here. I took over the position of EMS/Fire Science Manager in June 2010.

On August 22, 2011, College of DuPage, located in Glen Ellyn, IL, opened the doors of its new Homeland Education Center to its students. This state of the art facility is the premier homeland security and emergency response training facility in the Midwest.

The 60,000 square foot training facility houses the college's Fire Science, Emergency Medical Technician, and Criminal Justice programs as well as the Suburban Law Enforcement Academy. The Fire Science program at College of DuPage is widely recognized as one of the top service-oriented fire programs in Illinois. The program benefits both professional firefighters and firefighter candidates interested in increasing their knowledge and skill levels. Fire Science has approximately 60 accredited courses of which about 35 are offered every semester, starting with Introduction to Fire Science and continuing through Officer Development courses. Beginning Spring 2012, Emergency Medical Responder (First Responder) will be offered along with the highly successful Emergency Medical Technician-Basic and Paramedic programs.

One of the building's main attractions is the 4,500 square foot indoor street scene. This immersive lab has functional fire hydrants and drainage systems and includes a lighting system that can take students from total darkness, to a moon lit street, to the light of day at the push of a button. State of the art classrooms make up the "businesses" that line the street scene. These classrooms also have the capability of being reconfigured to create a set-up similar to a dry cleaner, convenient store, or anything imaginable presenting students with configurations they may encounter in the field.

Two theatrical smoke rooms with moveable walls challenge the student enrolled in the firefighter training courses. The smoke machines are capable of filling the rooms so densely that he can barely see his hand in front of his face. With the capability of changing the room configuration, students will be forced to rely on skills and techniques, rather than remembering the layout

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from previous evolutions. The 4-story training tower also has moveable walls. Forcible entry, rappelling, a fully functional standpipe system, and confined space training are just some of the capabilities the tower has to offer.

A full-scale mock ambulance that is stocked with EMS supplies and equipment is the centerpiece of the EMT program. For practical scenarios, students are “dispatched” to one of the reconfigurable rooms. This could be on the first or second floor. They need to gather their equipment, make sure the scene is safe, and run through an entire scenario finishing with the patient stabilized and ready for transport in the back of the ambulance.

This facility is a fantastic starting point for preparing today’s first responders for an array of incidents – from international and domestic terrorism, to man-made and natural disasters, to the day-to-day requests for service that fire and police agencies from the surrounding communities receive.

What the new facility is going to allow, not only for the Fire Science program but also for the Criminal Justice and Suburban Law Enforcement Academy, is the ability to update and expand curriculums to meet the training needs of today’s responders. Additional classes geared for the fire professional are under development and review with offerings to begin in 2012. These classes will prepare fire professionals for promotion, specialty team assignments, and will provide enhanced training required for knowledge and skills maintenance.

College of DuPage is one of the largest single-campus community colleges in the nation, educating more than 31,000 each semester, and is the second largest institution of higher education behind the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. College of DuPage’s location makes it ideally located, with easy transportation access from major cities such as Milwaukee, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and is only about 40 minutes from both O’Hare International and Midway Airports.

PHOTOS: TOP - Carol Stream Fire District donated an ambulance body to the Center. This has already had a positive impact on the EMT program by providing a more realistic training environment.

MIDDLE - Smoke room in the process of being filled with the theatrical smoke.

BOTTOM - Four-story training tower with moveable walls offers rappelling/vertical rescue, confined space, standpipe operations and forcible entry. These are just some of the training capabilities.

Photos provided by college.

