



Extrication Coalition Promotes Training and Competition



Rescue teams compete in the Suncoast Extrication Challenge, using mental skills and state-of-the-art tools to solve extrication scenarios.



Joe Kolodziej, left, has been working with fire rescue departments since 1982.

When city funds weren't available for rescue training, South Florida tower Joe Kolodziej Sr., of Joe's Towing & Recovery in Largo got together with the Clearwater, Palm Harbor, Pinellas Park, and Seminole fire rescue departments and created their own training organization. For four years, the Suncoast Extrication Coalition (SEC) has been conducting extrication training through the Florida Regional Extrication Challenge. The three-day event has teams of rescuers competing against the clock and complex extrication scenarios. Teams pay a fee to compete, with the money going toward putting on the event.

Along with Dan Zinge of the Palm Harbor Fire Department, Marvin Pettingill of the Clearwater Fire Department, Tom Winkler of the Seminole Fire Department, and Dean Shepherd of the Pinellas Park Fire Department, Kolodziej, the only member of the coalition who is a tower and not a firefighter, saw the need for this training and supplies vehicles for rescue personnel to extricate dummy victims.

Kolodziej has been working with fire departments since 1982, gaining a reputation for putting together some brutal rescue scenarios involving a wide range of vehicles. Rescue teams have found themselves faced with front-end loaders lying on top of victims; having to tunnel into cars wedged between Jersey barriers; having airbags deploy while performing extrications; burning, overturned school buses with victims trapped inside; and vehicles charged with electricity.

The SEC has attracted attention from the rescue community and the media. Local channel Bay News 9 has reported on Kolodziej's rescue efforts on numerous occasions.

For Kolodziej, all the effort put into the Coalition is a worthwhile undertaking for one reason: "If through this training they can save one life," he says, "that's all that counts."



Miller Industries Conducts Rescue Rotator Seminar

Rescue personnel and firefighters from the Los Angeles city and county fire departments, the Torrance Fire Department and the Washington, D.C., Fire Department recently attended a Miller Industries rotator seminar held at the Los Angeles County Fire Training Center. Towers from the West Coast and from as far away as Florida and Maryland also attended the two-day event.

Rescue demonstrations included a car underneath an overturned cement mixer, a car under a bus and a vehicle on its side wedged between a bus and a Jersey barrier. The Los Angeles city and county fire departments and the Washington, D.C., Fire Department each have Century rotators in their fleets and use them for rescue and to service their fleet vehicles.

The seminar was conducted by John Hawkins and Tom Luciano of Miller Industries. Robert and Rob Van Lingen of Van Lingen Towing in Torrance, California, handled seminar preparation, planning and registration. The Van Lingen's donated checks totaling \$7,000 to the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum Survivor Fund.

