

Fire Rescue

Recently I had the opportunity to attend the Hot Zone Hands-On Training event hosted by the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue (PBFR) Department at their headquarters training center on Pike Road in West Palm Beach.

It is said, to appreciate someone's burden you first need to walk in their "boots." To better understand the tasks we ask our first responders to routinely undertake, a group of us donned bunker gear (complete with boots, masks, air tanks and even body armor) and sampled several scenarios testing our abilities and endurance.

From extricating a vehicle passenger utilizing some serious metal bending and cutting tools, to responding to the scene of an active shooter with victims requiring immediate aid, to a smoke filled building with victims in needs of aid, to a fully involved structure fire, we were carefully guided through each scenario by seasoned fire professionals.

Needless to say, I now have a much greater appreciation of the challenges faced by these brave men and women. I am proud to report we are in the most capable hands with county's first-responders.

PBFR is one of the largest fire departments in the state of Florida. In addition to fire and/or medical emergencies, they are trained to respond to hazardous materials/conditions, plane crashes, aircraft emergencies, active shooter incidents, chemical and fuel spills, and water and animal rescues. PBFR is also involved in hurricane/disaster planning and response and presidential detail.

Quick Statistics on PBCFR:

- 140,000 911 calls for help each year
- 49 fire stations, including Palm Beach International Airport
- Covering 1,761 square miles
- More than 1,500 employees

Non-emergency Services:

- Fire and arson investigations
- Building fire safety inspections
- Construction plans review

- Community education presentations
- Mobile Integrated Health Program – for follow-up with patients in need after 911 calls
- CARES Team – for emotional first aid for families and resource connection services

Seniors Getting Scammed

What to look for and how to help

Every year over 3 million senior citizens are victims of scams resulting in over \$3 billion in losses. Internet scams are a growing problem for our retirement population especially since many are very trusting and susceptible to fraudulent activities.

One of the most popular internet scams is phishing when a scammer uses fraudulent emails or texts, or copycat websites, to get personal information such as bank account and social security numbers. Phishing is usually done through fraudulent emails containing malware.

Other popular scams are computer “pop-ups” claiming you have won a sweepstake or lottery, counterfeit prescription drugs advertisements or emails, and employment and “sweetheart” scams.

How to avoid becoming a victim:

- Avoid opening or clicking on links from emails or ads from unfamiliar sources.
- Don’t give personal information over the phone or online to an unknown party
- If a deal on a vacation, prescription drug, or something else seems too good to be true, it probably is. Perform more research on the company providing the deal.
- The government **will not** notify you of a late bill or owed payment over an ad on a website.
- Bank accounts and retirement accounts for unusual purchases or withdrawals should also be monitored.
- Review and discuss monthly bills and prescriptions, and be aware of any new mention of “new” bills or “cheaper” prescriptions.

How to report scams

It's vital to report scams to the authorities since it's the first step in trying to catch these criminals.

FBI: Blue and white collar crimes including internet scams, especially if money is involved (<https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us>).

Federal Trade Commissioner: telemarketing and phishing scams (https://www.identitytheft.gov/?utm_source=takeaction).

Social Security Administration: anything involving your social security number and/or funds (<https://oig.ssa.gov/report-fraud-waste-or-abuse>).

Nonprofit Spotlight: Place of Hope

Place of Hope is a unique, faith-based, state-licensed children's organization providing family-style foster care, maternity care, safety for victims of domestic minor sex trafficking, transitional housing and support services for youth aging out of foster care, and housing and support services for homeless families.

They also provide foster care recruitment and support for children and families who have been traumatized by abuse and neglect throughout our region.

Place of Hope's mission is to foster hope rather than despair, potential rather than limitations, healing rather than hurting, belonging rather than isolation, and what the future can be, rather than what the past has been. For more information, please visit <https://www.placeofhope.com/>.