

Firefighters tackle a steep learning curve

A group of elite firefighters who are part of Edmonton's Fire Rescue Services Technical Rescue Team conducted intense rescue training exercises on a steep embankment in the River Valley's Rio Park.

This training is key to maintaining the skills of those specialized firefighters who are called out at least once a month to help people who've become trapped on river valley slopes.

"Edmonton has the biggest river valley park system in North America, with more than 140 kilometres of embankment and shoreline used daily by Edmontonians," said Technical Rescue Team Coordinator Corey Selby. "We respond to dozens of rescue calls in the River Valley each year. Often the calls come from hikers, bikers or kids who become trapped on a steep embankment while exploring our vast river valley and cannot get back up to safety."



For this training exercise, firefighters used a twin tension rope system to lower rescuers down the side of the embankment with a basket stretcher. At the bottom of the embankment, firefighters loaded a mock patient onto the stretcher who was then hauled back up to safety.

The Technical Rescue Team is a group of 90 specialized senior firefighters who participate in quarterly training and learn rescue techniques for more complicated emergencies they can encounter when responding to calls for help.

In 2013, Edmonton Fire Rescue Services' Technical Rescue Team responded to 23 embankment rescue calls in the River Valley. The team has responded to 17 calls so far in 2014. Fire Rescue Services anticipates that these numbers will continue to rise as more Edmontonians seek out recreational activities in the river valley, which makes these training exercises important.

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