NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2001

Bravest preparing to restaff elite units

By MICHELE McPHEE
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

The Fire Department is beefing up its decimated Special Operations Command, which lost 13 highly trained members and entire specialized units in the World Trade Center attacks.

Last Monday, 21 firefighters began a three-week training regimen to transfer into rescue units, squad commands and hazardous-materials operations at the FDNY's academy on Randalls Island.

The recruits will attend one week of hazmat training and two weeks of rescue school before entering the Special Operations Command, which is trained to deal with catastrophes, said Capt. Vincent Doherty, the executive officer of hazmat operations.

The FDNY plans to train 150 recruits for the elite battalion by February, not only to replenish its ranks, which had numbered about 450, but to meet the increased need for firefighters trained to respond to terrorist attacks, fire officials said.

"We lost a lot of quality men, and with them, their experience," Doherty said.





LIFE CLASS An FDNY Special Operations recruit donned a hazmat suit during training last week on Randalls Island. Dozens

of Special Ops firefighters were lost at World Trade Cente

A class in anthrax

Because of the current crisis, Doherty added an hour-long lesson on handling anthrax to his curriculum. "We're giving them the training, and we have upped the number of training courses to meet the need," he said.

Among the Sept. 11 victims were Special Operations commanders including Deputy Chief Ray Downey, who ran the unit and was on the verge of retirement. Downey had been among the FDNY officials who responded to the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

Battalion Chief John Moran, in charge of the safety division, is believed to have died alongside Downey. Chief Jack Fanning, who was in charge of hazmat operations, also was lost, as was Battalion Chief John Paolillo and Capt. Terry Hatton, the commanding officer of Manhattan's daring Rescue 1 unit.

Special Operations Battalion Chief Charlie Kasper, who FDNY sources said had been tapped as Downey's successor, died, as did Joe Angellini Sr. of Rescue 1, the command's most senior firefighter, with more than 40 years on the job.

His firefighter son, Joe Angellini Jr., is missing, as well.

Losses before Sept. 11

In June, the command already was coping with the losses of two of its senior men, Rescue 4's Harry Ford and Brian Fahey, who died, along with another firefighter, John Downing, after a Queens hardware store exploded.

Capt. Brian Hickey — who had been buried in bricks and was badly injured in that Father's Day blast — only recently had returned to full duty, and is among the 343 firefighters dead.

"These were the most highly trained people in the department," said FDN spokesman Frank Gribbon. "These were people who ha a lot of years of experience They were interested in extensive training. ... These a the guys who roll in catastrophe. We send the units to go in and make sur the firefighters get out."

Those who will be assigned to the command in two weeks will be replaced by a class of 400 probationary firefighters set to enter the Fire Academy by the end of the month, Gribbon said. It is the largest class of new firefighters in the history of the department.

"We're under the gun to g guys back up to the calib that we had," said hazmat o erations Lt. Stan Rybak. "B we'll be back — we're comi

CITY_21MC100_011831409

NYC-WTC_000413702