

My Champlain Valley - New York, Vermont Firefighters Learn Swift Water Rescue Techniques

By Spencer Conlin

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Saranac, Ny. - Firefighters from New York and Vermont are gathering in Saranac this weekend to learn life-saving techniques on the water.

Self-rescue was the focus for Saturday.

"A person can get all the protective gear on and unless he can save himself in an incident, he has got to learn that skill first," Chief Don Uhler, from the Saranac Fire Department, said.

Uhler is one of three nationally certified instructors in the firehouse. He says the training is invaluable for rescue teams across the region as it prepares students for just about anything.

"Whether it'd be recreational kayaker, recreational rafter on the weekend or the incident when you get three four five inches of rain a quick flood," Uhler said.

Uhler says the Saranac River presents many challenges which makes it the perfect training ground.

"Today the water that you have seen is some true class two with some class three features so this would be the type of water the recreational kayaker can get into trouble with," Uhler said.

In addition to the team from Saranac, there were firefighters from Vermont including Benson Fire Chief Tom Neumann.

"This is the best training we can possibly get, mostly what we deal with are lakes but doing this course gives us that confidence to deal with any of the waters that we have to deal with," Neumann said.

Neumann says hands-on experience is the only way to be prepared.

"It's an adverse environment, if we are not doing the way we train, if we are not following the direction, if we are not working together this is an environment where you can get hurt," Neumann said.

"I think it builds confidence really quickly and everyone on both sides of the lake are doing really well today," Uhler added.

With the warmer weather approaching, Chief Uhler reminds folks to stay away from water you are unfamiliar with and to pay close attention to changing water conditions.