

tion, seminars and hands-on training exercises.”

From the many, one is chosen

When the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) simultaneously recognized the need for a PES for its 300,000-plus U.S. and Canadian members, it concluded that the Petzl EXO was the best system capable of rapid deployment under severe conditions.

Mike Hayes, the man originally charged with developing the PES, had been working as an instructor at the FDIC, and during one of their conferences, introduced representatives from the IAFF Health and Safety division to Cohen and Fire Ground Technologies. Although they rarely – if ever – endorse private companies, the IAFF saw the value and talent of Cohen’s ability to successfully train his students, and chose Fire Ground Technologies, already an authorized dealer and trainer of the Petzl EXO PES, to be the preferred training of all IAFF Master Instructors. Since purchase and use of the system requires training from a Petzl authorized trainer, this established Fire Ground Technologies as the go-to school for internation-

al firefighting and private companies.

Cohen, who was originally trained by Petzl over a three-day course in Utah, was flown to Los Angeles to train about 20 IAFF Master Instructors. His company became tasked with ensuring that their students fully understand the operation of the EXO. Thus, it has developed comprehensive lectures and hands-on classes to accomplish this objective. Ninety percent of the courses he teaches relate to escape systems, with the remainder being basic structural fire classes including venting, search and rescue, engine company ops, thermal imaging and others.

Check the syllabus

An end-user course takes one day of 10 slides using the Petzl EXO which get progressively harder. “Train the trainer” courses consist of 24 hours of class over three days. Officers and firefighters are trained and then become certified to train the guys in their departments only. An individual or fire company can schedule a class whenever they can commit to buying the system and delegate the time. Fire Ground Technologies travels around the country training departments locally using its 24-foot

mobile training center. Otherwise, they do training in academies and in vacant structures.

Hackensack, New Jersey became the first department, outside the FDNY, in the country to adopt the Petzl system, and since then, Kearny and Paterson have purchased it. Union and Teaneck are among the departments who have successfully gone through training with Cohen’s company.

To ensure the absolute best in quality instruction, Fire Ground Technologies’ instructors are selected from the ranks of the FDNY Special Operations Command including both active and retired members. Currently, Cohen has eight to 10 part-time instructors. Together, they have trained roughly 5,000 students since 2006 from Arkansas to Alaska... all with no injuries.

“This is the first stage of Personal Escape Systems,” says Cohen, whose company, unlike his competitors, exclusively sells the Petzl EXO system. As history unfortunately shows, sometimes it takes the sacrifice of firefighters to push technology forward, but as innovations like these continue to develop, their sacrifices will not have been in vain.



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