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Chippewa Falls students undergo emergency training

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Be prepared. That's not only the motto of the Boy Scouts, but words that 30 students in the Chippewa Falls School District are now living by, too.

The 30 middle and high school students returned to school Monday, spending the first week of their summer vacation learning about first aid and fire safety as part of Wisconsin's first School Emergency Response Team — or SERT.

Over a three-day period, a team of firemen and EMS responders from across the state are sharing their knowledge with the students as they learn everything from how to put out fires to dealing with a mass casualty terrorist disaster.

"We're teaching them based on our own experiences," said Tom Eithun, a captain with the Oregon (Wis.) Fire and EMS Department.

Capt. Alonzo Chapman of the Milwaukee Fire Department is joining Eithun in teaching the students basic fire training.

"We're giving them the basic knowledge on how to put out a small fire," he said.

How to use a fire extinguisher and preventive measures are also part of the training, along with first aid, CPR and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training.



Hot stuff -- Claire LeBrec, left, and Jamie Berg extinguish a fire on Chippewa Falls Middle School grounds with the help of Capt. Alonzo Chapman of the Milwaukee Fire Department.

Special to the Herald

The Chippewa Falls program is the first in the state presented by the Center for Emergency Health in Schools, said Mary Jean Erschen of the Waunakee Fire Department. The program is funded through a grant from the United States Department of Homeland Security.

“After Sept. 11, 2001 we were asked to do more training in schools,” Erschen said. This week’s program at the Chippewa Falls Middle School was an offshoot of that directive.

Erschen said the Chippewa Falls students are the next generation of EMS responders in the community, and will be trained to help in an emergency situation.

Bob Severson, safety director for the Chippewa Falls School District, said the SERT program benefits both the community and schools.

“The students trained will be a great resource in the case of an emergency,” Severson said. They would be able to assist first responders and help keep emergency situations under control until fire and EMS crews arrive on a scene.

“And Lord, I hope it never happens again, but if there is an accident when our students are on a trip, this group will know what to do,” he said.

There’s no doubt in Severson’s mind that having the first of the state’s 400 trained students in Chippewa Falls is a good thing.

“Looking at the big picture, if one of these kids saves just one life someday, the three days were worth it,” Severson said.

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