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TN-HART team partners with local EMA for joint, water-rescue exercise

NEW JOHNSONVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team partnered with Humphreys County Emergency Management Agency and other local and state first responders during a joint search and rescue exercise, Oct. 19, on Kentucky Lake.

This exercise, led by Humphrey’s County EMA, integrated land, water, and air assets from participating departments. The Tennessee National Guard provided a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, crewmembers, and hoist operators. The Nashville Fire Department provided specialized aerial water rescue divers, Tennessee Wildlife and Resources Agency provided water security, and Humphreys County EMA provided command and control for the exercise.

“Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not been able to all get together like this and practice emergency operations on a larger scale,” said Amanda Hite, Humphreys County Deputy Emergency Manager. “I am so glad we were able to train today because it helps us not only integrate with one another, but it helps us identify our strengths and where we can improve.”

The scenario took place in Kentucky Lake, next to the Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park, and simulated a civilian boat crash that required immediate, multiagency search and rescue operations. The TN-HART team practiced rescuing two simulated drowning victims by lowering specialized water-rescue Nashville Firefighters from 70 feet into the near-freezing water. From there, the firefighter proceeded to secure the simulated victim while Tennessee National Guard crewmembers hoisted them to safety. In total, the TN-HART team practiced four hoist rescues.

“Hoisting over moving water adds additional complexity to an already dangerous maneuver,” said Chief Warrant Officer 3 J.J. Spradling, who piloted the aircraft. “It requires us to operate at a lower, more dangerous altitude, which leaves little room for error. It is critical we practice these maneuvers as often as we can with our partner agencies to maintain our proficiency.”

The Tennessee Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team is a multiagency partnership between the Tennessee Army National Guard and the Nashville Fire Department. Every member of the team underwent special training to be qualified for these types of rescues.

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The Tennessee Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team partnered with Humphreys County Emergency Management Agency and other local and state first responders during a joint search and rescue exercise, Oct. 19, on Kentucky Lake. (Photo by Capt. Kealy Moriarty)



Flight crew from Tennessee National Guard's 1-230th Air Assault Battalion gather with Humphreys County first responders after the joint search and rescue exercise, Oct. 19, on Kentucky Lake. (Photo by Capt. Kealy Moriarty)



The Tennessee Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team partnered with Humphreys County Emergency Management Agency and other local and state first responders during a joint search and rescue exercise, Oct. 19, on Kentucky Lake. (Photo by Capt. Kealy Moriarty)

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