



Matt Kramer (left front), principal instructor for the Frederick-Firestone Water Rescue Team, briefs the team members before the start of training activities at Milavec Lake.

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diving skills and search-and-rescue skills."

These skills are not learned overnight, and the underwater training itself is inherently dangerous. It can't be taught hastily or casually - and it's time consuming.

"There are dangers in working underwater, but now this boat gives us a somewhat controlled-training environment," Sullivan said. "It takes a lot of devotion and commitment to create a water rescue team."

"There's a lot of discipline required in diving safety checks and double-checks."

He said there's a big difference between recreational scuba diving and going down 29 feet for rescue and recovery operations to a sunken boat.

The Frederick-Firestone Water Rescue Team seeks to master all the

skills that may be called upon in an area with a growing population, a tremendously popular recreation center swimming pool, and a large fishing lake just minutes away, not to mention networks of irrigation ditches with fast-flowing water and other nearby open bodies of water.

"This training involves technical skills that take a long-term commitment to achieve the desired level of training," Sullivan said.

Considering the crowd of watchers that stood in the hot sun on the shore that morning, Kramer said a quick, 30-minute sinking may have been more dramatic, but it would have been unrealistic.

"Water operations can take hours, not minutes," he said. "And that's why you need a big support group of not only team members, but also personnel



While preparing Kramer's boat for sinking, team members also familiarize themselves with flotation devices.

from other agencies," Kramer said.

The less-than-perfect sinking demanded real teamwork, and problem solving, because it's better to work those bugs ahead than on the scene of a drowning, Kramer said.

It was more than lake water in Kramer's eyes as he watched an old friend slowly slip beneath the surface of the water.

It reminded him again that drowning is the second-leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., especially children under 4 and males between 15 and 24.

Over the years, Kramer has seen - up close and personal - tragedies that can result from water activities.

If a child wants to go tubing in a

river or stream, Kramer said parents should first take a kayaking class. Wear lifejackets when boating - always.

Watch over children when they're in or around backyard pools, ponds, even large buckets of water.

"Get involved with your kids around water," he said.

Key words from Kramer, Sullivan, and every member of the team: "The Frederick-Firestone Water Rescue Team is dedicated to saving lives through prevention."