



SOUTH SALT LAKE Journal

Not just news, our community news!

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FREE!

Hazmat exercise seemed like the real deal

By Liesel Gowen

Where there was smoke, there was Metro Fire Agency.

The MFA hazardous materials response team was out in force early on the morning of Nov. 4, practicing in the Roper Rail Yard. Firefighters in hazmat suits from South Salt Lake, Murray, Midvale, West Valley City and West Jordan responded to contain a mock hazardous materials spill – but at first, they thought the training exercise was real.

“They were taken off guard, which is what we wanted to see because the best way to do a [training] event is to not prepare for it,” said SSL Fire Chief Steve Foote. “We’re not going to say that we’re going to have a hazmat spill at 9 o’clock this morning, because it doesn’t happen that way. They happen when they happen. We wanted some realism so we did not alert them or give them a lot of information.”

The “leaking liquid” firefighters encountered was benign, and the “chemical vapors” were created by smoke machines. But at first, they were told that some of the tanker piping had become damaged and its contents – hydrochloric acid and anhydrous ammonia – were escaping. Their mission was to stop the leak and contain the potentially lethal mixing of the chemicals.

Only the safety department at Union Pacific and top-level fire department personnel knew the truth about the “spill.”

They simulated an evacuation. The teams went in wearing level eight suits for maximum protection against the toxic chemicals.

“We used training suits because it was not really anhydrous ammonia,” Foote said. “but in cases like that, those people are getting right up next to where that vapor is escaping and they have to deal with it, they have to shut it down. If any of that had gotten on their skin, it would cause immediate death.”

The inspiration for this training event was an actual spill that happened in March 2005 at the same location. Acids inside a rail car ate away at the metal and created a large-scale chemical spill, which resulted in closing nearby Interstate 15, evacuating residents, stopping rail traffic throughout the western states and causing more than \$120,000 damage.

A press release from MFA said “The aftermath of this event resulted in a comprehensive plan initiated by Union Pacific to strengthen the working relationship.”

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Veterans Day program awakens new generation



A Highland High ROTC cadet presents the flag while the West High Madrigals watch.

By Cindy Woodruff

It’s important for today’s youth to know how they got all the freedoms they enjoy. The Salt Lake County Division of Youth Services hosted its eighth annual Veterans Day Celebration Ceremony on Nov. 9 to help them remember.

“A lot of these kids are coming from bad circumstances,” said Tammy McPherson, public relations coordinator for Youth Services. “This opens their eyes to the things they take for granted. Even though they have personal challenges,

they still have the freedoms that are taken for granted in this country.”

Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon thanked Youth Services for holding a ceremony to honor veterans.

Dr. Roger Gisseman, Youth Services associate director and a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, opened the ceremony by reading the number of Americans who have died in each war. Then a moment of silence was observed to remember their sacrifice.

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Start a new Christmas tradition by adopting a Native American elder



Grace S. Yellowhammer (seated) and her friend, Frances Bahe, display Yellowhammer’s original rug, “Seasonal Healing.”

By Cindy Woodruff

Grace S. Yellowhammer learned to weave rugs from her grandmother when she was 7 years old. She is 72 now and continues to weave using the Navajo traditions her grandmother taught her.

“When you sit down to weave, first you have to meditate on the rug,” Yellowhammer said. “Then you sing the traditional song and say the prayer before you start.”

As the elder Navajos die, many of these traditions are lost.

But a program headquartered at 328 West Gregson in South Salt Lake is determined to not only preserve the Native American culture but to make the twilight years of the Native American elders more comfortable.

The Adopt-A-Native-Elder program assists elders through donations of food, clothing, blankets, firewood and yarn for weaving.

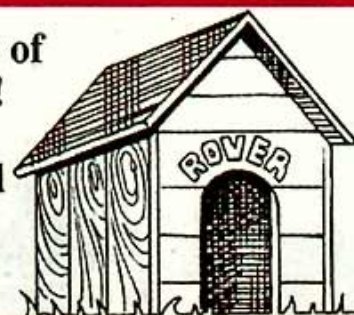
Started by Linda Myers in the late 1980s, the program supports 350 traditional elders who live in the northern portion of Arizona and southern Utah.

She was touched by the traditional stories told to her by Yellowhammer and Rose Hulligan, Myers said. Soon she was taking donated food, clothing and medical supplies to elders living on the northern Arizona reservation.

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