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Romeoville Fire Department Prepared for Search and Rescue Situations

The Romeoville Fire Department does more than just put out fires and provide medical aid. They are also trained in search and rescue and have the right equipment for these situations.

In 2018, the fire department purchased a drone to gain aerial perspectives on situations they were called out to. In addition to being an eye in the sky, the drone also has the ability to utilize thermal imaging, which helps to find hot spots and advancing blazes. The imaging is a fantastic tool for search and rescue. The ability to find body heat signatures in forest and water areas is invaluable.

The fire department is also prepared for water rescue. Romeoville has a fire boat used for aquatic operations on the Sanitary and Ship Canal and smaller inflatable boats for the Des Plaines River. The boat utilizes sonar and a smaller, more portable second sonar system was recently purchased. It scans for different things and can be used in smaller bodies of water like retention ponds. The department also has an underwater drone equipped with video and sonar capability. Sonar is important because the waterways in Romeoville are murky and difficult to see in. Once the sonar locates something of interest, a diver can be dispatched to the exact location and be in and out relatively quickly, minimizing the risk to human life.

Now that air and sea are covered, we move to land. This is where Roy comes in. Roy is a dog, specifically a field trial Labrador. He is being trained in disaster work (finding survivors in building collapses) and tracking and trailing (finding missing people that are still living). Roy has been with the department since May 2022, but still has a lot of training to go until he is certified to be out in the field. Roy lives with his handler, Assistant Fire Chief Bill Murray.

While all these capabilities keep the residents of Romeoville safe, they are also available to surrounding communities and, in some cases, other states. The fire department is a part of many mutual aid organizations and will supply their equipment and expertise when and where they are needed.

“At the end of the day, all this equipment and training is about saving lives,” explained Mayor Noak. “The Romeoville Fire Department has transformed into a modern state of the art organization. Area residents should feel safer knowing they are there for us.”

