

ST. TAMMANY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT # 1

1358 Corporate Square Drive
Slidell, LA 70458



Fire Chief - Larry Hess

For Immediate Release

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St. Tammany Fire Protection District No.1 Honors Slidell Police Officer Mark Michaud

St. Tammany Fire Protection District No. 1 awarded Slidell Police Officer Mark Michaud a plaque in recognition of his selfless dedication to training members of the fire department in the safe use of their new Rapid Diver System. Michaud, a veteran of the Slidell Police Department and professional diver for the past 11 years, has volunteered his time and talents on several occasions over the past year to provide training to 40 District No.1 firefighters.

The Rapid Diver System was put into service after Fire Protection District No.1 responded to several water related incidents. Firefighters were finding themselves entering waterways to perform rescues with minimal safety equipment. The district found a solution in the Rapid Diver system that provides responders with a limited air supply and buoyancy compensation device that will help keep them safe when entering the water in the future. Each unit provides flotation and a 10 minute air supply. According to Michaud, "It (Rapid Diver) is used just for rescue and to keep the firefighters or police officers safe."

The Rapid Diver units cost \$1,200.00 each and the district has purchased six. Two Rapid Diver Units are located on the department's Rescue Truck and on two of the district's Fire Engines where the response area includes significant waterways. The Rapid Diver system is a fast donning, light weight, all inclusive scuba system that mates a tank, regulator and buoyancy module to a universal fit load bearing harness. The benefits of this system include the ability to store the unit in a small space, be donned and activated quickly within an emergency vehicle where conventional scuba gear would be cumbersome. The Rapid Diver system can also be used as a Tactical Swimmers vest or can accommodate full size tanks for extended use.

Members of the Fire Department are provided training by Rick Sutton of the Coral Reef Dive Shop on the basics of scuba. Michaud then takes over and checks out each diver at the Cross Gates athletic club's pool. Michaud then introduces the divers to 8 hours of realistic training in the Eden Isles canal behind Fire Station 16 on Marina Drive.

According to FD1 Chief of Administration Chris Kaufmann, "What he [Michaud] does is above and beyond the call of duty." Michaud's efforts demonstrate his commitment to public safety, the safety of first responders in the Slidell area and the excellent relationship between the Slidell Police Department and St. Tammany Fire Protection District No.1.

For more information about St. Tammany Fire Protection District #1 visit us at www.SlidellFire.org or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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