

ST. TAMMANY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT # 1

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Fire Chief - Larry Hess

For Immediate Release

February 15, 2013

FD1, Sheriff's Office and LA State Police Respond to the Report of a Vehicle Submerged in Water; No Occupants Found

St. Tammany Fire Protection District No.1, the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office and Louisiana State Police responded to the report of a submerged vehicle in the area of I-10 East Exit 261 at Oak Harbor Boulevard on Monday February 11, 2013 at 10:23 am.

After arriving on the scene, a Sheriff's Deputy and FD1 personnel found a single vehicle submerged in water. The vehicle appeared to have been in the water for an extended period of time due to the lack of disturbed mud and engine fluids in the water around the vehicle. There were no witnesses on the scene when units arrived; however, FD1 Fire Operator/Rapid Diver Steve Coulon, having donned the Rapid Diver System, entered the water within 11 minutes of arrival on scene and conducted a search of the vehicle and surrounding water for occupants of the vehicle.

No one was found in the vehicle or surrounding area and the diver exited the water after the search. According to FD1 Public Information Officer Mike Thiel, "This incident reinforces the need for programs such as the Rapid Diver utilized by District No.1, and the Dive Rescue and Recovery programs of the Slidell Police Department and St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office. In a community surrounded by water, incidents such as this are bound to occur and it is vital that emergency responders are able to mitigate these incidents safely and effectively. Training, equipment and interagency cooperation are vital to our success."

The Rapid Diver Program utilized by FD1 was developed around The Rapid Diver System after Fire Protection District No.1 responded to several water related incidents in which Firefighters were finding themselves entering waterways to perform rescues with minimal safety equipment. The Rapid Diver System provides responders with a limited air supply and buoyancy compensation device that will help keep them safe when entering water.

Each unit provides flotation and a 10 minute air supply. The Rapid Diver units cost \$1,200.00 each and the district has purchased six. Two of the units are located on the department's Rescue Truck and the other units are on two 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. [More...](#)

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 S.C.U.B.A. Slidell Police Officer and Professional Diver Mark 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.

To date 55 FD1 personnel have been trained in the use of the Rapid Diver System.

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

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