

## Preparing for the worst



**A small private plane lay in tatters on the rocks at the bottom of the abandoned quarry.** A man was sprawled on the ground nearby, thrown from the cockpit. Another was trapped inside the plane. Rescuers rappelled down the cliff face to reach the crash scene below, while a helicopter hovered nearby waiting to take the injured to a hospital.

Visitors to Oakes Quarry Park in Fairborn last October may have thought they had stumbled onto a disaster in the making, or perhaps a movie set.



Instead, the park was the site of an elaborate tactical field exercise for U.S. Air Force and Army National Guard emergency personnel and civilian emergency medical technicians (EMTs), sponsored by the medical school's National Center for Medical Readiness (NCMR). The exercise, part of a unique weeklong recertification course, featured a realistic simulation of a plane crash amid rugged terrain, including the use of a full-size, wrecked private plane with volunteer "victims" and high-tech, remote-controlled medical mannequins inside.

Participants in the training assessed and responded to the situation using real procedures and equipment, including specialized gear designed to safely extract crash victims from the wreckage, provide immediate life-saving care, and lower them securely from a steep ridge to more stable ground. Miami Valley Hospital's CareFlight Air and Mobile Services also participated by providing a helicopter evacuation of the patients.



Participants in the NCMR recertification course took part in an extended tactical field exercise that included rappelling down a cliff face to the site of a simulated plane crash with multiple victims, some of whom were stabilized and then evacuated by helicopter.

The scale and realism of the intense scenario were exciting, but the nature of the course itself is equally remarkable, according to Mark Gebhart, M.D., associate professor of emergency medicine, director of EMS/medical readiness, and director of the NCMR.

"We're creating a fairly unique opportunity for military and civilian paramedics to work together, learn from one another, and lay the groundwork for better collaboration in the event of a real emergency," Gebhart said.

Disasters such as hurricanes or floods, disease epidemics, and terrorist attacks are all situations that can require a rapid, large-scale, and well-coordinated response by military and civilian personnel. Unfortunately, training that brings together first responders from both sides is rare, Gebhart explained.

The course attracted participants and observers from throughout the Dayton region and as far away as Utah and West Virginia. In addition to Wright State and Miami Valley Hospital, police and fire departments of several local communities and the fire department of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base helped to provide portions of the training. **VS**