# Firefighters train to move water

**BY NORMAN CANNADA**
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SENECA — The scenario was one that firefighters in Oconee County face on a regular basis.

A fire was reported in a large structure. Because of the unavailability of hydrants, a shuttle system had to be set up with nine tanker trucks drawing water from Lake Keowee and bringing the water to the site, dumping it and heading back to get more water. Staging centers were set up to organize the water shuttle.

Meanwhile, trucks were set up at the mock fire site, pulling water from holding tanks where the tanker trucks had dumped the water. The goal was to be able to sustain 1,000 gallons of water per minute for two hours.

"When you think about a large fire in a community, you need people and water from other communities to come help," said Mark Davis, president of GBW Associates, a Maryland company that helps local fire departments across the nation come up with creative solutions for finding water supplies in rural areas. "One of the most important things for the rural departments is they've got to train together, especially on the water supply. This is an opportunity to practice on a larger scale."

The mock fire and training exercise Sunday was the culmination of a two-day training seminar with 75 firefighters and about 15 fire trucks. While the location of the exercise – the Hamilton Career Center – has an ample water supply and fire hydrants to handle a school fire, Oconee County Fire Chief Charlie King said the school was used because of its location to practice the plan for shuttling water to a fire site. About 50 of the 75 firemen were from Oconee County.

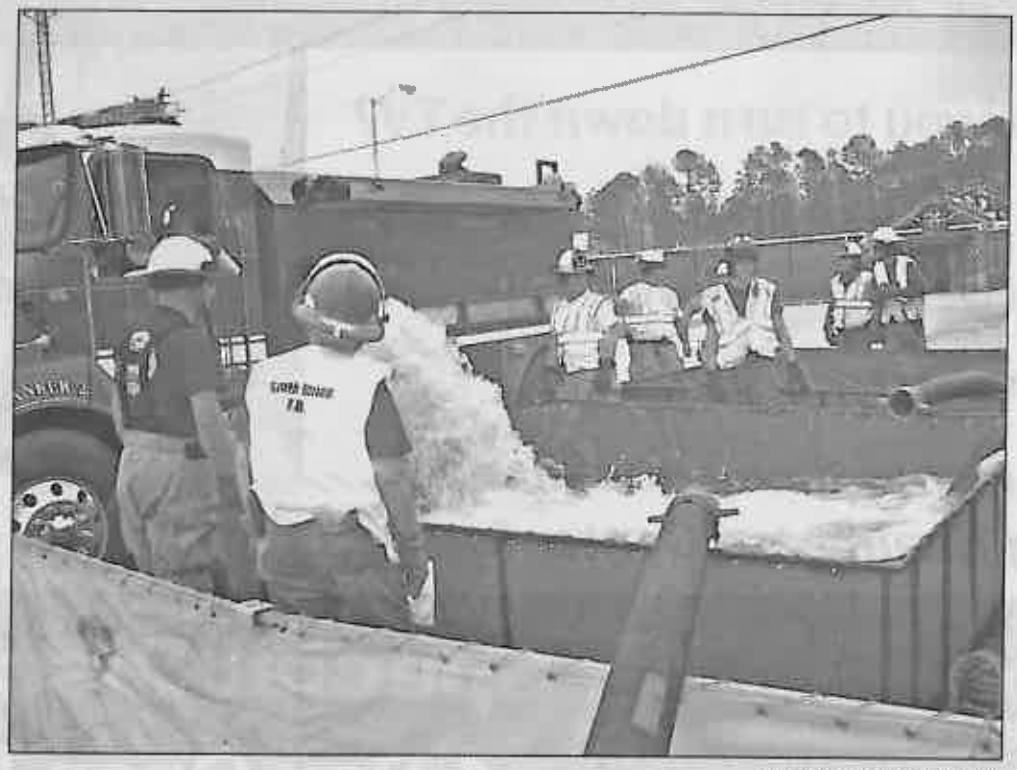
"We want to train the way we fight," said King. "We work out our problems, our issues, our equipment needs and kind of get it down pat and so when it really does happen we're in the mode to do it right. We're coming together to train how to deliver water in a rural setting where you may not have hydrants – they are either unavailable or inoperable to get water to a fire. It is the predominate way we operate in Oconee County."

King said there is a great need for more fire hydrants in the county, but fire hydrants alone do not solve the problem because some water systems cannot sustain the flow that is required to fight a fire even from a hydrant.

"It's easy to go and put a hydrant on a water system," King said. "The problem is, 'Is the water system able to sustain the flow?' We typically require a flow upward of 1,000 gallons per minute and a water system needs to be able to sustain that. In those water systems, they build their systems to provide drinking and home use water, and fire flow is secondary. There are lots of places where the water systems cannot support a hydrant."

Davis said Sunday's training exercise is a required training of the Insurance Services Organization (ISO), which sets standards for all aspects of fire protections. An overall ISO rating for an area helps determine what fire insurance rates will be in that area.

"One of the requirements in ISO is that you have some type of mutual aid training on an annual basis," said Davis. "The drill that we're doing here is the ISO drill, so it is one of things they would have to demonstrate to ISO to show that they can move water."



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**Most of Oconee County lies in areas where fire hydrants are not available or can provide the 1,000 gallons per minute for two hours needed to fight a major structure fire. Tanker trucks bring water to the fire location where the water is put in these holding tanks, as shown in a fire training exercise Sunday at the Hamilton Career Center.**

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