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Firefighters Learn Advanced Techniques through Rio Hondo College's Annual Regional Truck Academy

SANTE FE SPRINGS – Four dozen firefighters from across the nation hewed their way through structures with axes and chainsaws this week as they engaged in advanced training through Rio Hondo College's annual Regional Truck Academy in Santa Fe Springs.

The 88-hour training program, which started Monday, Jan. 5 and runs through Friday, Jan. 16, provides a mix of instructional lectures and visual hands-on exercises, including axe work, forcible entry into burning structures, structure ventilation, high-rise operations, elevator rescues, rope rescues, thermal imaging, auto extraction and rapid intervention tactics.

Firefighters from departments in California, South Carolina, Nevada and the Barona Indian Reservation are taking the program at the Rio Hondo Fire Training Center, 11400 Greenstone Ave., Santa Fe Springs.

"It's a great opportunity for firefighters to advance or refresh their training in key skillsets," said Tracy Rickman, Rio Hondo's Fire Academy Coordinator. "We're the only program I know of in California that offers such an extensive training program."

That intensity repeatedly draws far more applications than the College can accommodate – more than 20 were turned away this January – prompting Rickman to consider adding a second class to the schedule this year or in 2016.

This week, firefighters will be ripping open 25 cars with the Jaws of Life as they practice emergency rescues.

The Truck Academy was launched in 2006 as part of an expansion of a suite of firefighting and emergency service training offered by Rio Hondo. This is the 10th class of firefighters to be trained.

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Rio Hondo College, located in Whittier, California, is committed to the success of its diverse students and communities by providing dynamic educational opportunities and resources that lead to associate degrees, certificates, transfer, career and technical pathways, basic skills proficiency, and lifelong learning. For information on the College or its programs, please call 562-692-0921 or visit www.riohondo.edu.