

## Andover Volunteer Beats Record In Firefighter Combat Challenge On ESPN

Firefighter and Paramedic Bradley Hardie of the Lebanon Fire Department (and a volunteer firefighter and paramedic in Andover) recently bested the New Hampshire state record while competing in the Scott Firefighter Combat Challenge as seen on ESPN. Brad drove 1,500 miles to compete in the regional Combat Challenge, held in Akron, Ohio.

Brad beat the current New Hampshire state record by 1.5 seconds, for a time of 2:20:44 minutes. The previous record, held by James Hoffman of the Derry Fire Department, was 2:21:92 minutes. The New Hampshire firefighter record had stood unbeaten for four years.

The average firefighter takes more than five minutes to complete the events. The Firefighter Combat Challenge, which ESPN deemed "the toughest two minutes in sports," is ultimately about the individual competitor's personal best and not about beating others' records.

The Firefighter Combat Challenge events are all completed in the same turnout gear that firefighters wear while attempting to fight structure fires, including their Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) air packs. The competitors actually breathe the compressed air from the SCBA while competing. This gear adds an additional weight of approximately 80 pounds to firefighters anytime they are fighting structure fires.

The Combat Challenge consists of five sequential events that simulate what firefighters often perform while fighting structure fires, forcing entry, ventilating a roof, or attempting rescues.

### The Five Events

The five events start with the competitor racing to the top of a five-story tower with a 45-pound hose pack carried on the shoulder. The competitor then deposits the hose pack in a bucket and pulls a second 45-pound hose roll up to the top of the tower via a rope. The competitor deposits this hose roll in the same bucket and races back down the tower, touching every stair tread on the way down.

Once off the tower, the competitor runs to a sled to hit a 160-pound steel I-beam backwards a distance of five feet using a nine-pound shot mallet. The competitor then runs a 140-foot slalom of fire hydrants, weaving quickly and carefully because a time penalty is assessed if a hydrant tips over.

Once through the slalom, the competitor picks up a 1 3/4" hose line charged with water, runs 75 feet through a set of opaque doors, and shoots water at a small circular target. As water is aimed at the target, or if the competitor fails to completely shut off the water flow at the nozzle, spectators get wet, which is always a crowd favorite with the kids!

The competitor then runs over to a waiting 175-pound dummy called "Rescue Randy," lifts it off the ground, and drags it backward 100 feet across a finish line where the clock finally stops!

### Competing Around The Country

Brad has been competing in the Challenge for three years, traveling as far as Colorado, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Ohio, and Pennsylvania to compete in regional challenges. He travels to Las Vegas on November 4 to compete in World Challenge XVI, where he hopes to shatter his own record. Brad believes that it promotes and exposes the physical rigors all firefighters are exposed to while performing common firefighting tasks.

Brad has been a full-time firefighter for three years, starting as a call firefighter in North Conway in 1996. Brad, who has



Brad Hardie, a volunteer firefighter on the Andover Fire Department, a volunteer paramedic on the Andover Rescue Squad, and a full-time professional firefighter and paramedic on the Lebanon Fire Department, is shown competing in the 2007 Scott Firefighter Combat Challenge regional competition in Akron, Ohio. Brad beat the record for New Hampshire firefighters in the five grueling events, completing them (wearing 80 pounds of turnout gear) in just over two minutes and twenty seconds.

also been a paramedic for four years, received his training at Northeastern University. He serves in Andover as a volunteer firefighter and paramedic and has previously worked as a firefighter/paramedic in North Hampton and Hopkinton and as a per-diem paramedic for New London Hospital and North Conway ambulance.

There are 1.5 million firefighters (full-time and volunteer) in the US, and every year about 100 firefighters die in the line of duty, nearly half from heart attacks. Heart attacks also kill hundreds of thousands of citizens in this country every year. Medical training is a very important aspect to emergency services today.

Not only has Brad excelled in the physical fitness arena of the emergency services, but earlier this year he won the New England Regional Quality CPR Challenge in the Paramedic category of the five-minute CPR challenge. CPR skills are evaluated using a computer and a high tech sensor attached to a CPR dummy on which the CPR is performed.

The CPR challenge assesses a competitor's ability to perform consistent CPR, both in rate and depth of compressions. Too deep or shallow, or too slow or fast, prevents the heart from properly distributing oxygenated blood to the brain and body. Consistency and proper rate is vital to mortality and is why the American Heart Association recently changed CPR protocol.

### Skills Save Lives

While competing and showcasing the skills of emergency service providers is significant, the greatest success is when the skills actually save lives. Fourteen Lebanon firefighters, including Brad, were honored on October 10 in Concord. This group of "brothers" was awarded a unit citation for the rescue and ultimate resuscitation of a fire victim who was not only burned severely but also in cardiac arrest when a crew that included Brad found her inside the fire.

Firefighter/Paramedic Christopher Buchanon initially found the victim while performing a search along with Brad. Immediately, Brad and Captain/Paramedic Andrew White pulled the woman from the fire. Captain/Paramedic Chris Simon, Firefighter/Paramedics Phil Green and Jon Paul, and Call Firefighter Todd Hamilton were the EMS crews outside who quickly revived the pulseless and breathless victim using Advanced Cardiac Life Support measures during transport to Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center.

Captain White and Firefighters Christopher Buchanon and Brad Hardie were each also awarded the Class 3 Medal of Valor for their actions during that fire. This dramatic story is one of many success stories that result from the ongoing training that emergency service workers do every day.

Brad would like to thank his sponsors for their continued support, help, and financial assistance:

- Lebanon Permanent Firefighters IAFF Local 3197
- AudienceWorks.com
- Amcomm Wireless / Verizon, West Lebanon/Claremont
- Kidder Auto, West Lebanon
- Art Attack, Newport
- Salt Hill Pub, Lebanon/Newport
- Captain Bill Lapan
- Proctor Academy

Without their backing, Brad's promotion of health and wellness would not be possible.

The activities described above, the records broken, and the competitions highlight very little of what firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics do on a daily basis all over the world. The real success stories are the public these people serve.

The take-home message is this: Find a CPR class nearby (you never know when a family member or friend will need *you*) and change the batteries in your smoke detectors twice a year when you change your clocks. Smoke detectors save lives.



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*to benefit the Andover Fire Department*

**Saturday, December 1  
Andover Fire House • 8 AM**

*Arrive early for the best choice of sizes, colors, and prices!*

## CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

*to benefit the East Andover Fire Department*

**Saturday, December 8  
East Andover Fire House • 8 AM**

*To reserve a tree, call Ed Becker at Lake Farm Realty 735-5444*