NYPD Emergency Service Unit Achieves New York State Specialized Rescue Team Certification

by Detective Michael Corr, ESU (Retired)

On October 19 and 20, 2026, the NYPD Emergency Service Unit (ESU) underwent a series of technical evaluations conducted by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC), a division of the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (NYSDHSES). The evaluations were designed to determine whether the level of training, technical proficiency, and operational experience possessed by the Unit met the rigorous standards required for certification as a New York State Specialized Rescue Team. State evaluators focused their assessment on three primary technical rescue disciplines:

1. High-Angle Rope Rescue
2. Confined Space Rescue
3. Trench Rescue

HIGH ANGLE ROPE RESCUE

October 19, 2026, the ESU team met with state evaluators at the New York Police Department's Rodmans Neck facility in the Bronx. Utilizing the HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficing Area) training building, the team conducted a series of high-angle rope rescue exercises designed to demonstrate proficiency in basic anchoring, ascending, rappelling, belaying, mechanical advantage systems, and patient packaging.



The first exercise involved transferring a suspended worker from one rope system to another.

The second require rescuers to reach and remove a victim from an elevated ledge.

The third exercise involved accessing an accident victim and performing a high-point removal.

CONFINED SPACE RESCUE

Following the High-Angle Rope Rescue evolutions the ESU team focused on confined space rescue operations by outling the various hazards and operational considerations associated with confined space rescue operations, including the appropriate procedures and resources necessary to conduct a safe and effective rescue. Topics included atmospheric monitoring, ventilation, the use of both supplied-air systems and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), and victim retrieval systems The evaluation exercises included atmospheric monitoring, deployment of a supplied air system, packaging and removing a victim through a side portal, and rescuing a victim from an elevator shaft using a high-point retrieval system.





TRENCH RESCUE

On October 20, the evaluation moved to the ESU facility at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. The final evaluation of the day focused on trench rescue operations involving both intersecting and non-intersecting trenches. Before beginning the practical exercises, the ESU team explained the hazards associated with trench rescues, along with the personnel, equipment, and resources required to safely conduct rescue and recovery operations. The practical evaluation consisted of installing T-shoring, rescuing and packaging a victim in a Stokes basket, and raising the victim to the surface using a ladder.

STATE CERTIFICATION

The two day evaluation demonstrated the NYPD Emergency Service Unit's extensive technical capabilities across all three specialized rescue disciplines. Following the successful completion of the evaluations, the NYPD Emergency Service Unit achieved New York State certification as a Technical Rescue Team. This designation makes ESU available to assist other jurisdictions throughout New York State when specialized technical rescue resources are needed through the state's mutual aid system. In addition, the certification makes the ESU team eligible to participate in the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC provides a mechanism for states to share personnel, equipment, and other resources across state lines during emergencies and disasters through an interstate mutual aid agreement. This program is separate and distinct from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) program, in which the NYPD Emergency Service Unit is a founding member and key component of New York Task Force One (NY-TF1) .