berry, O'Keefe, and myself to a standing position and toward the edge of the roof. Nobody let go. The members held their positions and stabilized the rope. They then lowered rescuer and victim to the floor below, where they were pulled in the window by waiting firefighters, who had been notified by command via portable radio to expect us.

We now had one rescue completed. At this point we knew the following: At least one other victim required rescuing; interior fire conditions had worsened since our ascent to the roof; and due to the heavy fire condition, another LSR had not reached the roof yet (each rescue company carries only one)—meaning that we would have to use the same rope twice.

Barr released the rope from the 11th floor, and we quickly pulled it back up to the roof. We commenced operations on the exposure side #4 of the building. It basically was the same scenario as the first rescue, with personnel changes. Firefighter Shea would be lowered this time. Firefighter Ray McCormack of Ladder 24 would be the lowering man, with O'Keefe and Newberry holding him down.

Shea was lowered to the second victim. He instructed the victim to wrap his arms and legs around Shea's body. After the victim did as instructed, rescuer and victim were lowered to the floor below the fire (the 11th floor) and to safety.

* * *

This concluded one of the most dramatic and unique rescues in FDNY history. It should be noted that during the rescue operations many other units were heavily engaged in a very dangerous and difficult fire suppression operation. Much credit should be given to Deputy Chief Stephen De Rosa and Battalion Chiefs McDermott and Thomas Pilner, whose judgment, experience, and tight control of the fire scene were vital to the successful mitigation of the incident. ■

TRAINING PAYS OFF

BY RAY DOWNEY

Rope rescue is one of the most difficult challenges firefighters face. Firefighters in New York City are introduced to ropes, life-saving belts, personal harnesses, and a variety of evolutions designed to train members to perform rope rescues with the proficiency demonstrated by FDNY Firefighters Kevin Shea and Patrick Barr on May 14. This introduction begins in probationary training and continues throughout a firefighter's career. Daily and weekly drills emphasize the importance of maintaining these rescue skills.

Training for FDNY members begins with basic rope knot tying and progresses to lowering members from a training tower window and rooftop. Members are instructed in self-rescue with the life-saving rope, life belt, and personal harness. Recruits must lower other members, be lowered by other members, and single-slide in self-rescue from the 75-foot-high training tower to graduate from training school.

Probationary firefighters are issued personal harnesses as part of their gear and instructed in rescue techniques using them. The Rope Unit, part of the Training Division, issues the harnesses and ropes and is responsible for training.

The harnesses are worn by members while on duty, and the personal rope (40 feet of ⅝-inch eight-strand plaited nylon) is carried in a rope pouch that members store in their turnout coats.

Standard operating procedures charge the roof man with the responsibility of ensuring that a life-saving rope and a life-saving belt are part of his tools/equipment and are brought to the roof or floor above the fire floor in case a rope rescue is required. Each year in New York City members perform a number of successful rope rescues. This article shows two of the most dramatic. Last month a member of FDNY received the highest medal of valor for performing a difficult rope rescue in Harlem during a fire operation.

Proficiency in rope rescue is not achieved in one training session. A number of training evolutions are included in our training manuals, including lowering a firefighter from a rooftop or window to a victim with the personal harness, life-saving belt, and life-saving rope. The method used in this article is called "lowering a member via life-saving rope and life belt." The member is secured with a bowline on the bight and lowered to the victim's location. This method allows the rescuer to have both hands free. In most instances the victim is panicky, and understandably so, and either will leap onto the rescuer or grab for him when he comes within reach. By having both hands free, the rescuer can secure the victim with a bear-hug hold for a safer descent.

Communication is maintained with the member lowering the rescuer by another member on the roof or at the window, who directs the operation from that vantage point. Teamwork is the key and is emphasized during training.

The success of this type of rope rescue operation was recognized by the British fire service when a 10-member team from FDNY was invited to demonstrate the technique at "Fire International 89" in Birmingham, England. Included on the team were six members who had performed successful rope rescues dur-

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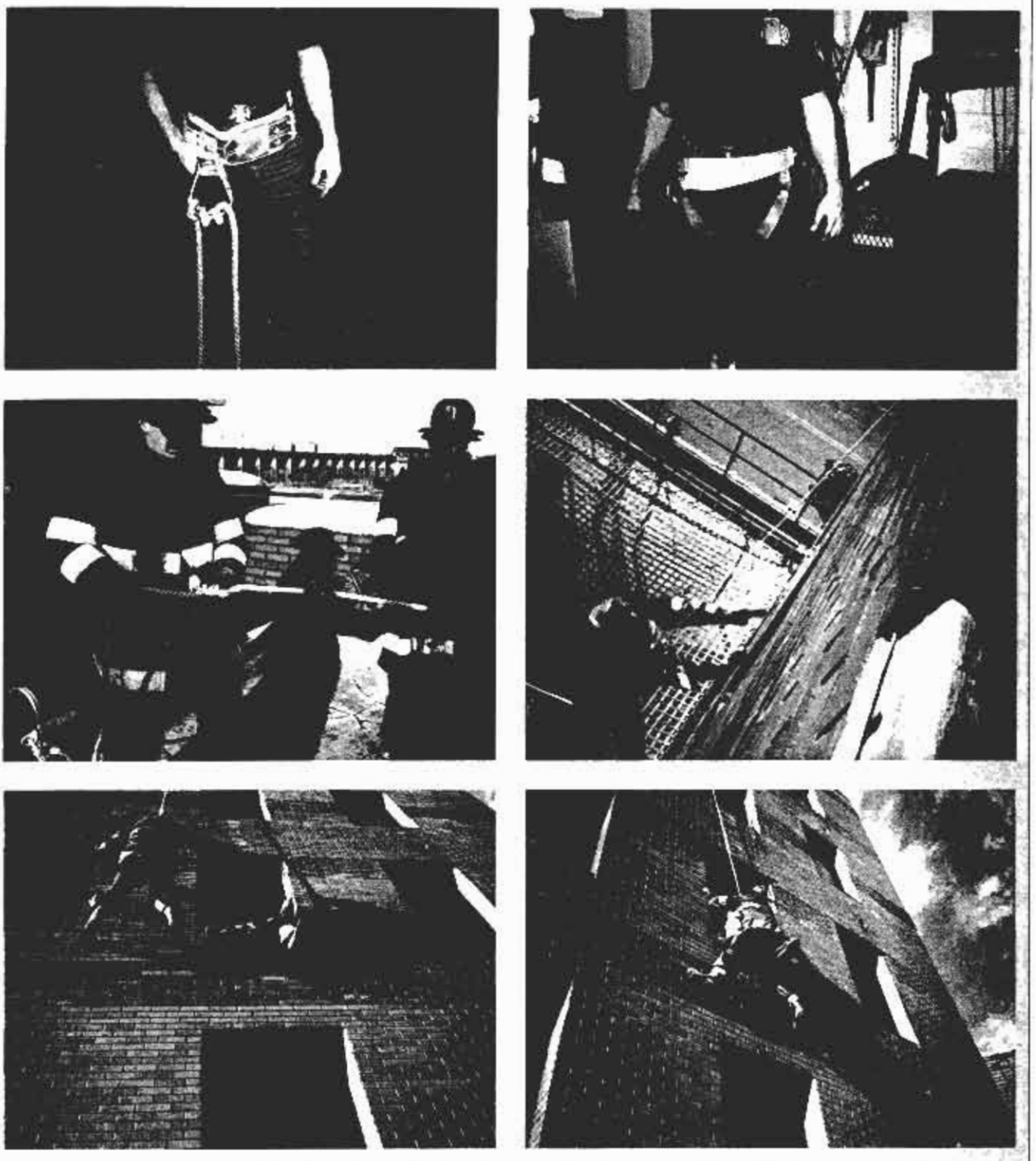
ing fire operations. The experience enabled team members to interact and observe techniques used by British and other European fire rescue teams. As one of the team leaders, I found it gratifying to see our members perform with precision a proven technique that has saved numerous lives. ■



FDNY rope-rescue training begins in probie school and is ongoing throughout the firefighter's career. (Top left and right) Personnel model the life belt and personal harness. (Middle left) The lowering man, tied off to a substantial object, adjusts the LSR and harness. (Middle right, bottom left and right) Members perform a rope-rescue training evolution. (Photos by Ray Downey.)