

Firefighters learn how to fight a raging heater reactor fire common in the chemical and petroleum industries.

Fire It Up!

The firefighters at the 61st annual Texas Firemen's Training School know they have an important job to do and looks of determination show in their eyes.

Firefighters from around the world are at Brayton Fire Field on the Texas A&M campus training to combat flames. Their training continues until the end of the day.

Their commitment is impressive. In fact, many volunteer firefighters are using their vacation time to train.

Training procedures are taught through a combination of classroom and practical instruction.

In the classroom, the techniques for extinguishing the fire are discussed and immediately afterward, the firefighters put their knowledge to use.

Fires of all types, from small automobile fires to large-scale industrial fires, are set in different situations all over the 60-plus acres of Brayton field.

Third-year veteran Tom Beesley, a volunteer firefighter from Mineola, said it is a great learning experience.



Exxon fire brigade firefighter Darrell Duhon splashes his suit down to stay cool.

"Everybody wants to come. But not everybody can"

— Ricky Lummus, firefighter

"You get to do exotic things under controlled circumstances," he said.

Firefighters practice extinguishing fires 96 times each week, and the summer heat makes them particularly susceptible to heat exhaustion.

Their firefighting gear is made of several layers of insulation, plus a flame-retardant outer covering.

It protects firefighters from the intense heat of the fire, but at the same time, it traps body heat, which can build up in a short time.

Jeffrey McNeel of the Beaumont Fire Department compared it to playing football on a summer afternoon wearing a sweater, coat, boots, gloves and a hat.

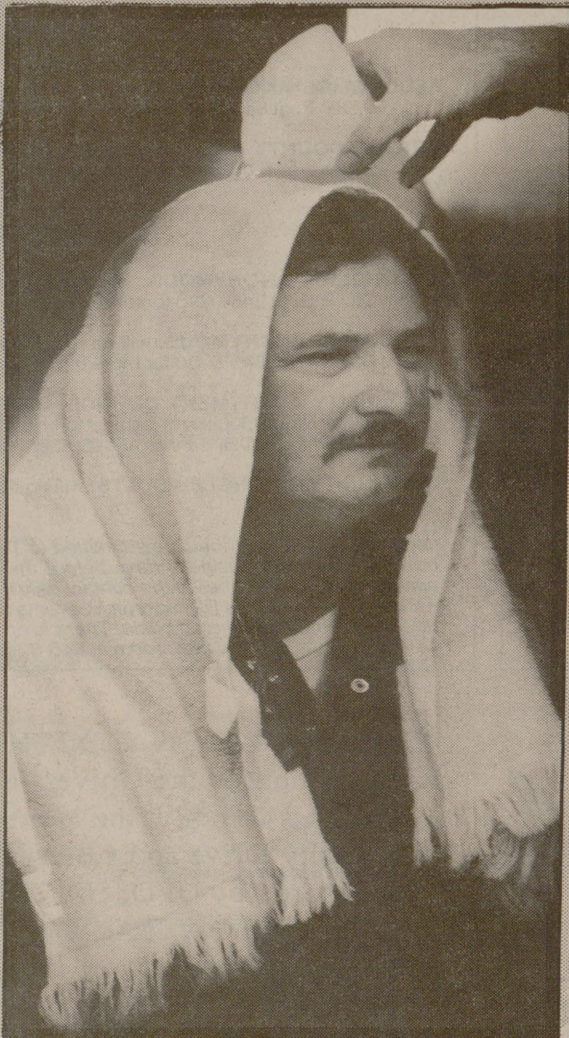
But that's still cooler than without protection, he said.

After a long day of firefighting, many firefighters enjoy an evening out on the town to unwind.

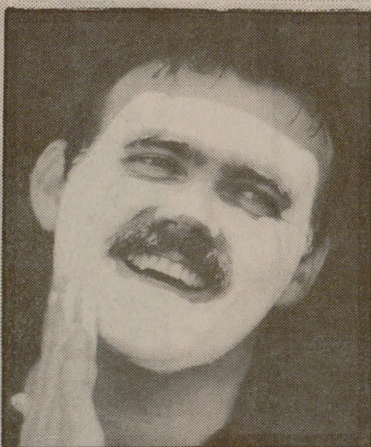
These men and women are the creme de la creme, chosen to participate by members of their respective fire departments, said Ricky Lummus of Bloomberg.

"Everybody wants to come," he said. "But not everybody can."

The work is strenuous and despite the sweltering summer heat and flickering flames, firefighters give it their all.



(Above and clockwise) After the fires are put out, firefighters wrap their heads in wet towels to prevent heat exhaustion. Field Training Instructor Butch Derr explains to students how firefighters stay together when entering a dark, smokey structure, one of the most important lessons taught at the school. Akzo Chemical's fire brigade attacks a raging deep-spill diesel fire. Duhon smears Desitin ointment on his face to protect it from splattering hot diesel fuel.



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