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[Chad]: There was just a golden retriever in the master bedroom. And the fire was in the kitchen. And he was hanging out there. And there was just smoke throughout the house. I called him, and he followed me. We went out, and he was okay. So those are the ones I like - the easy ones. And there have been some where you have to remove them and rescue them when they're unconscious. And you take them out and start working them. With some luck, we were able to get them back, and a lot of times we do.

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[SFX ONE]

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From WHJE, this is First Responders 411, getting you the inside scoop on first responders in and around Carmel.

[SFX TWO]

I'm Tatum Prati.

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[Tatum]: Pets are a big part of our lives. They are like family. So when something happens to them, it's undoubtedly a big deal. The firefighters in Carmel recognize this, so they will do anything they can to help. Fire Captain Chad Hughes shares some of his experiences with animal emergencies.

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[Chad]: I've rescued personally numerous animals throughout my career being in a fire. And not all of them have been rescues in a fire. And they've been positive outcomes. Some of them, not always. But we do our best. And we'll do what we can to try to make that rescue because the pets

are family members. And we have an oath, an obligation to save lives and property. Pets' lives, they matter. And we'll try to save all living creatures. Obviously people are the priority, but pets - we'll make those measured and calculated risks. If we can save a life, we're going to do it.

[Tatum]: Obviously, as a firefighter, Chad has gone on several fire-related animal rescues.

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[Chad]: There's been a couple of animal rescues that I've been apart of as far as finding them inside a home, inside a residence fire, being able to lead them out. A lot of times they'll be in a back room or they'll be in a basement, and they just need to be let out 'cause they're scared. So you just kind of assist them out. One thing back early in my career - gosh, early, so like 1990 - there was a stable fire up in the Noblesville district. And one thing that's interesting about a horse barn fire is horses are scared, they'll go back in their stall 'cause that's their safe place. And so that's kind of a challenge with all the equine facilities that we have here in Carmel is to have a background knowing that the horses, how they're going to react. And when an animal's scared like that and they weigh as much as they do, you just have to know how to properly handle it. Well, just so happened that one of the initial firefighters that responded was familiar, he had horse of his own. So he was able to lead them out with lead ropes. And he knows that they'll follow you through. So he was familiar leading them on their left side and taking them out. Then once you get them out, you gotta put them in either a pasture, a paddock, or something because they'll come back in.

[Tatum]: The horses are scared because of the chaos of a fire. Not only is a lot going on, but it's extremely loud.

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[Chad]: So for the animals, it's a scary moment. That's why you'll see the animals hiding like I talked about. So under beds or in closets or down in basements. They're scared just because, you know, when the smoke alarm goes off. You can have some of the bravest animals. That smoke alarm, the way it really hurts their ears, especially dogs, they want to get away from it. So you can have one of the bravest dogs - smoke alarm go off, and they just take off. One they're scared, but two it hurts their ears. So there's just a lot of noise in general on a fire scene.

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[Tatum]: A lot of times, the pets that are found inside of a fire are unconscious because of the smoke. For this reason, the Carmel firefighters carry three different sizes of pet masks for big, medium, and small animals. They are shaped kinda like a bowl, and they fit over the animal's nose.

[Chad]: We hook it up to our oxygen cylinders as we would a person. And we can deliver oxygen to the pet. And then we'll start stimulating it, trying to rub it, trying to get it to come around. But the oxygen mask really helps them. We've had a high degree of success with it. We're fortunate enough to carry this equipment on all the Carmel fire engines. So no matter where you are throughout the city, we can deliver that kind of service and assist with the pets. And we do so if we can.

[Tatum]: Like Chad said earlier, he has gone on several non-fire related animal rescues.

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[Chad]: We'll get a lot of animal rescues on the ponds where they have fallen through. Dogs in particular. And the reason why we do that is one, it helps the animal, but two, the homeowner or the pet owner or the bystanders are going to go out on the ice and risk human life. So we have the equipment, and that's why it's within our procedure and protocol to go ahead and facilitate

those type of operations just because we're trained to do it, we have the equipment to do so, and it keeps the public safe because let us do it versus someone who doesn't have the cold water suits, the immersion suits, and the ropes, and the manpower, the additional personnel to facilitate the operation.

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[Tatum]: They've responded to deer on the ice and even geese that have frozen to the pond. Usually, they will have a positive outcome, especially since a lot of the animals will self-rescue before they arrive. A lot of these calls come in from concerned citizens. They've also gotten nuisance calls for bees and bats. And people will occasionally call about coyotes. As Carmel continues growing, our interaction with wildlife continues to grow as well.

[Chad]: We have gone on ducklings in a drain. So what happens on that is the mom, mother duck, will walk over the storm drain with no problem. But the problem is the little babies fall right through the holes where her big feet, her webbed feet, she doesn't fall through. But her little ones will, right through there. So we've had a great deal of success with assisting the mom and getting all the babies back to her.

[Chad]: I've had cats get into storm drains where they'll chase a mouse or something into the drain. And then they go down there, and they couldn't get out. So I've done that where we had to pull the grate and get the cat out. You hear the old cat in trees, that kind of thing. As a general rule, we don't do that. But I have done that in the past where for whatever reason, the cat isn't going to come down. We've had wild animals, raccoons and so on, they'll get stuck - their heads stuck - in a limb or something like that. We'll do what we can to assist as needed.

[Tatum]: Chad advises people to call 9-1-1 whenever a pet is in trouble.

[Chad]: We had a call for a choking. As the crew responded, from I think it was Station 43, they were responding thinking that it was a person choking. As dispatch was able to get more information, they determined it was a dog. And this dog had swallowed a chew toy. And they went ahead and proceeded.

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[Chad]: They went ahead and responded. And they were able to dislodge this chew toy from the dog's trachea. They were able to clear his airway. And it had a positive outcome. And the dog's doing just fine.

[Tatum]: Fortunately for the people of Carmel, we are able to rely on the firefighters for much more than fires. Whether it's a person or a pet in trouble, we know we can count on the Carmel Fire Department to be there. This has been Tatum Prati for WHJE. More stories like this can be found at whje.com.

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