

## Virtual Training Center Opens at Clay Fire Department

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It's a new way of fighting fires — virtually. The newly opened Command Training Center at the Clay Fire Department is one of only eleven across the country.

Individuals can try different fire or emergency scenarios that would play out in real life.

"What this individual sees is what his fire crew would see, and that's gonna be different than the other images that the other crews are seeing, and all their actions are interlinked," explained Clay Fire Chief Tim Schabbel.

The firefighter's decision then gets called into the battalion chief who is stationed outside.

"They are feeding him [information] and he's coming up with his game plan just like we would do in the real fire," said Schabbel.

Then like a real fire the battalion chief would move from his SUV into a mobile command center once it gets on the scene.

"When they get to the actual fire it's really fairly easy, because they've been through the computer simulation at least 30 times and understand all the issues," explained Don Abbott of Phoenix, the creator of the program.

When the virtual training is over they come back to the classroom so they can go over the different scenarios — what they did right and what they did wrong — so ultimately when they get out on the streets they have a safer situation.

"The more that we can enhance our abilities to be strong commanders, the better the incident's gonna be, and then by that, of course, the better the public's going to be protected," said Schabbel.

Any fire department in the area will get to use the training facility. The Indiana Department of Homeland Security gave a \$50,000 grant to provide all the software.

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