Under the requirements set forth in 49 CFR Part 239, VRE conducts annual emergency response drills with first responders throughout the service area.

On Saturday, November 9th, VRE, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, Fairfax Police Department and Norfolk Southern Corporation and Keolis held a passenger train emergency response drill for calendar year 2013 on and around the railroad bridge that carries the Manassas Line over Lake Accotink Park in Fairfax County.

The goals of this drill were to not only familiarize the first response community with our equipment and practice procedural elements to a railroad-based emergency, but to place the scenario in a truly realistic environment. Fairfax County Parks Authority’s Lake Accotink Park afforded us both areas for staging and challenging access to the railroad, which was ideal.

Scenario

As a typical VRE train crossed the bridge at Lake Accotink, a defect resulted in an upright derailment. With numerous injuries varying in severity onboard by VRE and Norfolk Southern Railway operations personnel, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue was summoned to respond and quickly learned that an injured passenger had self-evacuated into the dense woods beyond the tracks.

Unable to locate them, Fairfax County Police Helicopter Unit was summoned to perform an aerial search using forward looking infrared equipment and guide rescuers to them.