

# REAL LIFE RESULTS

## Escaping a Fire...

### Dennis Muschol on the Parat Escape Hood

On Saturday, January 19, 2002 at approximately 9:00am Dennis Mushol awoke to fire alarms going off in his 31 story, 450 Unit Condominium building in Chicago, IL. This wasn't Dennis' 1st time to awake to fire alarms. In March of 2000 he survived a fire in an apartment two doors down in the same building. Dennis Mushol is a 15 year veteran police officer with the Chicago Police Department and as you can imagine, he may find extraordinary circumstances like this a bit routine. But after experiencing the thick smoke in the fire of 2000, he decided to prepare himself by purchasing a rechargeable fireman's flashlight and a Parat C smoke escape hood. In addition to this he thought up an escape plan and began to put suitable escape clothes out nightly beside his bed.

All that preparation paid off for Dennis because not even 2 years later he found himself in yet another apartment fire. He was on the 18th floor this time on Saturday morning when the fire alarm went off, but this time he was ready. He grabbed his flashlight, got dressed and put on the Parat Mask. "Having the Parat Mask knocked down the panic I was feeling so I could think of my plans and how to get out." said Dennis. He purchased the mask directly from Draeger and did most of his shopping and research for the product on the Internet. "At first I was going to purchase a Self Contained Breathing Apparatus, but they were too expensive, so I did a search on Fire and Smoke Protection and Smoke Hoods and up came hits for the Parat and the Evacuate. I decided on the Parat because it seemed like a quality filter and it was an overall better deal. I'll tell you, it was the best investment I ever made." He said.

Dennis practiced putting the mask on and taking it off. He said, "In a panic situation, the last thing you have time for is reading instructions and learning how to do something. I took it out of the box when I got it, but kept everything that needed to stay sealed in place. When the fire alarms went off, I put it on really fast. It was simple. All I had to do was pull tabs off the filter and I was ready."

Just then his friend on the 17th floor called him in a panic. "My friend was very upset and I didn't have an extra hood for her, so I went downstairs, soaked a towel in water, wrapped it around her head and doubled it around her face. It was the

best I could do without another hood." They both proceeded along with Dennis' evacuation plan to head down the stairwells.

Several weeks before this fire there had been a rash of small fires set in the building along with hate messages taped onto the elevator walls. This time a total of four fires were set, on the 30th floor, 31st floor, 4th floor and in the basement. "The largest fire was set in the basement of the building." Said Mr. Mushol. "The basement has a lot of chain link type lockers where people



store everything, like their Christmas decorations, coolers and items like that, so the fire was really bad down there. The heat was so intense that even though the fire didn't actually reach my storage area, the heat melted just about everything plastic in it. My luggage even melted and collapsed. The basement is next to the stairway and elevator and they had a chimney effect carrying the smoke through the whole building, but the smoke was thickest in the stairwells."

Unfortunately not only were the stairwells thick with smoke, but they were crammed with people trying to escape. "You know, this could have been a real catastrophe with people collapsing. " In the opposite stairwell to where Dennis was trying to escape, a longtime resident of the building died of smoke inhalation as he tried to make his way down the stairs from his 9th floor apartment according to the Cook County medial examiner's office. Police said his body was found on the fifth-floor stairwell. "I'm 100% convinced if he had one of these hoods he would have lived. He would have made it with one of these. I mean he was such a nice guy, he had children and grand children and I'm sure this is not what he or his family expected." Dennis said. Dennis is thinking

of revising his evacuation plan because of the number of people trying to escape all at once. "Think about it. How many people are in a high rise early on a Saturday morning? The place is full, on a weekday it would have been empty." He said. "It didn't take long to get from the 18th floor to the 6th floor, but to get from the 6th floor and then out of the building went really slow due to the crowd of people trying to get out. I don't know if people were trapped or elderly or what but we were jammed. I didn't want to get trapped and I wasn't in a position to help people because I wasn't on supplied air like a fire fighter. In a situation like this people are going to panic and you have to get as many people out of the stairway as quickly as possible. The building should have had a person on the ground to move people along. Once they got out of the building, they were in shock and were lingering by the exit where everyone else was trying to escape. If people had these masks on they would not be in such a panic and in a rush to take their lives into their own hands to get out because they would know they could survive. The people that need these things are the people who live or work in high-rise buildings and there are a lot of people in high-rises. What the Parat mask does is knocks down the panic you feel and allows you to think clearly enough to make a decision so you can think about why you need to get out. It makes an enormous difference in that kind of situation." He said.

Once Dennis was out of the building he had a lot of people come up to him, look at him in the bright orange hood and say, 'I gotta get one of those.' Because of that he went back to the company's web-site and printed out information on the Parat C and already has handed it out during their Condo building meeting. "No doubt the Parat helped save my life. I've already recommended it to my family and those in the building." He said. "I could really see me carrying one of these at work too. Sometimes you're the first person at the scene and as police officers we're taught don't go into the burning building because we are not trained firefighters. You're taught to notify the fire department, honk the squad car horn or siren to alert residents and clear the area for fire truck access - -but if you absolutely had to try to rescue someone - - you could do it with this hood. I'm kind of sold on these things." He said.