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## Rep. Howitt donates pet oxygen masks to Rehoboth Fire Department

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REHOBOTH — This month, the furry family members of Rehoboth received a lifeline.

With the start of his first term, state Rep. Steve Howitt donated a set of pet oxygen mask kits to the town's fire department.

Each kit comes with three oxygen masks of assorted sizes. The masks can resuscitate dogs, cats, rabbits, birds and many other household animals.

Firefighter Randy Larrivee said there aren't too many rescues in Rehoboth, but he estimated 30 percent of all rescues made by the Rehoboth Fire Department are for pets.

"Fires aren't always the biggest threat for animals," Larrivee said. "A lot of times they'll swim too far out, exhaust themselves, and have to be rescued."

Firefighter Jeff Thrasher, with his black lab Max at his heels, said pet oxygen masks could be utilized in both scenarios.

"We would use these in any case where an animal is in distress, whether they were in water or a burning house," Thrasher said.

Rehoboth firefighters had access to one pet oxygen mask before Howitt's donation. Although he has never had to use one, Larrivee said the pet masks have been put to use by other members of the department.

"We just have to turn on the oxygen and make a seal with the mask. It's not always perfect, but oxygen masks aren't always perfect for people either," Larrivee said.

The first pet oxygen mask belonged to the Anawan Street Fire Station and went on calls with the department's attack engine. Larrivee said the new set will be sent to the fire station on Pleasant Street and will accompany Engine 3 on every rescue.

"People come to Rehoboth so they can have the space for lots of animals," Larrivee said. "They have a very deep bond with their pets so it's both helpful and comforting to have more of these around."

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