



ANIMAL NEWS

Firefighters use specially designed oxygen masks to save cats

04:42 PM Mountain Standard Time on Monday, September 11, 2006

azfamily.com Staff

Two cats are alive today thanks to the Surprise Fire Department and a pair of new oxygen respirators designed specifically for animals in distress.



Surprise Fire Dept.
A firefighter administers oxygen to one of the rescued cats.

"Our first saves!" said Assistant Fire Chief Kevin Pool in a news release.

Heat and smoke had trapped the two cats when their Sun City Grand home caught fire Friday.

Firefighters were able to rescue the cats and resuscitate them using the new oxygen respirators.

"They worked perfectly, just as planned," said Fire Chief Michael White in a news release.

Firefighters had responded to a late-night house fire in Sun City Grand. The homeowners told them everybody had managed to escape, but two cats were still inside the burning house.

Crews doused the kitchen fire, which was producing some very heavy smoke. Once the flames were out, they started looking for the cats.

Firefighters found the felines in a bedroom. Both were limp and unresponsive.

Crews took the cats outside and gave them oxygen using two of the six Surgi-Vet animal oxygen masks, which were bought this summer for the department by Surprise City Council member Gwyn Foro.

The masks are made specifically to fit snugly over the muzzles of small animals. Not only are they shaped for animals' snouts, they also have a rubber ring to ensure a proper fit. The masks can be attached either to oxygen bottles or a flexible air bag that can be hand pumped by rescuers.

The oxygen quickly revived the cats, which were then taken to the vet by their owners. Both cats appeared to be just fine.



Surprise Fire Dept.
This is the first time the masks
have been used at a fire scene.

"We love to save lives. It hurts to lose an animal. Our troops are very glad to have these," White said in a news release last month. "This system will make a difference in the outcome of many of our fire calls that end up involving animals."

Firefighters say that loosing a pet in a fire can make an already difficult situation even harder on families.

Friday night was the first time the new animal oxygen masks had been used at a fire scene.

The masks, which came from a Florida company called H.E.L.P animals, eliminate the need for rescuers to improvise with equipment designed for humans. They also take the place of mouth-to-snout resuscitation.