



## **Firefighters from Haiti**

### **Train with Florida USAR team in Busch Gardens (Tampa, FL)**



**Tampa, FL** – Tampa’s popular theme park, Busch Gardens, was the training ground for 5 firefighters from Haiti who joined rescuers from fire departments from around the state of Florida for week long Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) training on August 23 through August 27<sup>th</sup> 2010.

The firefighters were given access to the Congo River Rapids water ride at Busch Gardens before the park opened in a drill to improve their rescue skills in urban flooding and fast-moving water conditions. This unique training prepared these rescuers to use skills that could save lives during urban flood and swiftly moving water rescue situations. The environment provided by the water ride gives rescuers as close to real life training as possible in a controllable location. The arrangement between Busch Gardens and the rescue class is the only one of its kind in Florida and possibly the nation. After the early morning session at Busch Gardens, the team then moved to Hillsborough River Dam to practice the use of inflatable rescue boats. The five day training is part of a 40-hour course in urban flood rescue offered by Florida Fire College and conducted by Safety Solution through a grant from Department of Homeland Security.

Led by Chief Ardouin Zephirin, the Haitian firefighters were taught valuable lifesaving tactics and strategies in water rescue operation to better assist their countrymen back in Haiti. These skills are desperately needed in the often hurricane ravaged Caribbean country. In 2008 Haiti was hit with four successive storms, including two major hurricanes that left over 2000 people dead and thousands displaced. In order to attend this training, Haitian firefighter received sponsorship from International Firefighters Assistance, Inc.

**International Firefighters Assistance, Inc.** is a registered 501(c)3 non- profit organization in Florida that provides humanitarian assistance, support, education and training to firefighters and emergency rescue workers in underprivileged countries. Through our relief programs, we hope to strengthen local communities by assisting its citizens to better prepare for emergencies and disasters.

International Firefighters Assistance, Inc.

*A Global Mission to Protect the Public*

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