Instructor Certification Program ensures experienced, high-quality instructors

The NDPC recognizes that a consistent approach to DHS-sponsored training starts with high-quality instructors. To ensure quality, the NDPC has developed and adopted an Instructor Certification Program (ICP). The ICP progresses through phases, which include selecting instructors, certifying instructors after competencies have been demonstrated, and a process of sustaining instructors with an emphasis on professional development opportunities. The ICP was developed in collaboration by the NDPC members. New Mexico Tech/EMRTC is a strong proponent of the instructor certification process with more than 65 of their instructors certified as outlined in the program prior to formal adoption by the NDPC.

Selecting an instructor is a critical first step in the process. Stringent requirements include more than technical expertise in the areas of explosives and improvised explosive devices — instructors must have experience in intelligence gathering, risk assessment analysis, and experience in adult education or training. Due to the course content, it is critical that instructors have first-hand knowledge in the magnitude of bombing events and the impact on citizens. New Mexico Tech’s training design attracts highly-qualified people.

As a result, the instructor pool is experienced and highly qualified. Many have responded to actual terrorist incidents such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, and suicide bombing incidents in Israel. These instructors bring to the training experience a first-hand knowledge of critical anti-terrorism measures such as security design of key government buildings and establishing countermeasures against potential targets.

During the Certification Phase, an experienced instructor mentors a new instructor and provides guidance, support, and coaching. The mentor’s role is not only to provide critical feedback and support, but also to coach on course presentation and training methodology. While all new instructors have training experience, learning the pace and rhythm of a particular course ensures successful delivery. New instructors are also videotaped during their supervised teach-back assessment. The videotape typically provides the new instructor with valuable insights into their style and presentation techniques. The teach-back measures the performance of the individual against the competencies identified for instructors for that specific course. Those earning a satisfactory score are then certified to instruct a specific course.

Letter from the Chairman

Earlier this year, the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium lauded the formation of the State Administrative Agency Advisory Council and its initial meeting held in Washington, D.C.

What came out of that January meeting was a list of recommendations and requests for the NDPC that encourage information sharing, collaboration and efficiency — efforts that increase their access to Consortium training. Let me share some specific examples. The SAA Advisory Council:

- Requested that each Consortium member provide the SAAs from each state with a list of all courses offered by category (i.e., resident, mobile, e-learning, etc.).
- Requested that each Consortium member provide a monthly report to the SAAs listing the courses being offered in their states. They would like to see it include mentoring, etc. on both a state and local level.
- Requested that any information obtained during individual Consortium member advisory meetings be passed to the NDPC SAA Advisory Council.

All eight recommendations serve as a collective focal point for improving EHT NDPC’s service to its clients: our states, Washington, D.C., and all U.S. possessions.

The SAA Advisory Council now consists of representatives from 11 states: California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and Washington. This group will ensure that the NDPC retains a state-centric emphasis on its strategy, whereby we remain sensitive to each multi-year training and exercise plan, or MYTEP.

You can bet we’ll talk more about these matters at our next quarterly meeting, which the SAA Advisory Council will also attend, in College Station, Texas. College Station is home to TEEX/NERRTC and Texas A&M University. Bring your sunscreen; meeting dates are July 28 thru August 1.

John W. (Bill) May, Jr.
TEEX/NERRRTC’s Emergency Operations Training Center marks expansion

Since 2003, the Texas Engineering Extension Service’s (TEEX) Emergency Operations Training Center, or EOTC, has trained thousands of incident managers, supervisors and jurisdiction officials to manage large-scale crises by using a unified command approach.

Thanks to a recently completed expansion project that nearly doubled its size, the new 32,000-square-foot EOTC is able to enhance the learning experience for senior executives, managers, supervisors and emergency management leadership for every discipline of emergency response. The facility’s expansion was marked by a May 27 ceremony that featured U.S. Congressman Chet Edwards as the keynote speaker.

The Emergency Operations Training Center is perhaps the most technologically-advanced facility of its kind, and is operated by TEEX’s National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center, or NERRTC, in College Station, Texas.

The EOTC offers simulated operations ranging from an incident command post perspective or an emergency operations center, to a multi-agency coordination viewpoint at a regional or state level. The result is a total-immersion experience that provides participants an extraordinarily realistic opportunity to manage a large-scale incident while following the National Incident Management System (NIMS), as required in the National Response Framework.

The proprietary software that provides the real training muscle for the EOTC was developed by Texas A&M Engineering and the Texas Engineering Experiment Station, although under the guidance of NERRTC training experts. The role-playing that occurs in response to computer-injected events can be delivered via several modes: LAN, Web browser, a combination of the two, or in a wireless stand-alone network. If needed, participants can even be in geographically different locations.

The backbone of the EOTC is the training analysis capability that allows for timely, quality after-action review of exercise activities. The instructional staff is unparalleled in terms of quality and experience and all have participated in, or managed, a large-scale incident.

TEEX’s Emergency Operations Training Center is strategically located on a 120 acre campus that also includes two of the country’s premier emergency response training venues: Disaster City® and Brayton Fire Training Field. The EOTC features direct, live video links to active response occurring in Disaster City®, meaning participants inside the EOTC can observe hands-on response efforts from their simulated incident command post or emergency operations center.

FEMA continues counter-terrorism training; record numbers completing program

The nation continues to improve its preparedness to respond to complex emergencies thanks to the highly-specialized Counter Terrorism Operations Support (CTOS) program sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The distinctive curriculum, which has seen a 48 percent increase in graduates, enables first responders to train with hazardous and radiological materials in a secure, controlled setting.

In 2007, a record-breaking 14,335 first responders were taught either directly via CTOS trainers, or indirectly via the web-based curriculum or by their own trainers who had attended specialized instructor training courses. These results represent a significant jump in enrollment and signify significant achievements in the nation’s preparation level.

CTOS specializes in radiological and nuclear threats and takes advantage of the experience gained during years of nuclear weapons testing and preparations to detect or respond to radiological/nuclear WMDs. The CTOS cadre is particularly adept at converting this highly technical subject matter into courses designed to meet the needs of our nation’s police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel.

“These transferable experiences provide enhanced capability through mobile teams that can support scenarios involving radiological or nuclear weapons of mass destruction,” explains Robert Summers, NSTec’s director of homeland security and defense applications. “The NTS provides our nation’s only environment for high-hazard material-based exercises, and the CTOS program has successfully expanded its scope to make first responders as capable and confident as possible in scenarios of high danger and urgency.”

FEMA coordinates the federal government’s role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

The National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Test Site Office, and its management and operating contractor National Security Technologies, operates the Nevada Test Site, and is responsible for conducting emergency response training at the Nevada Test Site and through mobile training teams. Additional information on CTOS courses can be found at http://www.nv.doe.gov/nationalsecurity/homelandsecurity/responder.htm.
NCBRT prepares winning SWAT team through counter-terrorism training

Six members of the Baton Rouge Police Department SWAT team recently took home the honor of Rookie Team Champion in the 2008 World SWAT Challenge in Little Rock, AR. Each member of the competing SWAT team is a graduate of one or more counter-terrorism training courses provided by LSU’s National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT). According to the team, the training the SWAT members received in the NCBRT courses assisted them in preparing for the competition as well as situations they encounter everyday.

According to SWAT Tactical Commander Lt. Noel Salamoni, “Any training we receive helps prepare us for real world situations.” Salamoni and his SWAT colleagues took courses with subject matter that ranged from scenarios involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to active shooters. “We learned how to do site assessments in the courses, and now we do those for major buildings such as the Baton Rouge River Center. We do assessments on these buildings now, gather information, photographs, and schematics on the buildings so that we can have a folder in place should something occur,” said Salamoni.

NCBRT courses are designed to train and prepare first responders to deal with a wide range of incidents ranging from natural disasters to terrorism. Course participants leave classes with the knowledge that they are better prepared for future threats. SWAT team member Sgt. Ricky Arnett likes how NCBRT courses show new ways of tackling familiar situations. “The materials and information relative to WMDs were most valuable in that conventional tactics were changed to meet unconventional objectives,” said Arnett. Sgt. Don Kelly, with the Baton Rouge Police Department is an instructor for the NCBRT. Kelly says the NCBRT’s training is helpful in preparing emergency responders for real world situations. “Ongoing, realistic training is of vital importance to everyone in law enforcement, especially high-risk positions such as SWAT. Everyone in the military or law enforcement learns at some point that the old saying ‘you fight like you train’ is absolutely true. Because when you’re suddenly confronted with a life or death situation that requires immediate instinctive action, your response, and your odds for survival, will usually be directly related to how well you’ve trained for that situation,” said Kelly.

Besides the World SWAT Challenge award, two teams of Baton Rouge SWAT officers placed first and second in a 2007 statewide competition as well as having taken first place in the Super SWAT category in a regional competition.
About the NDPC

The National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC) is a partnership of public and private organizations committed to serving emergency responders by providing quality, cost-effective counter-terrorism training.

The NDPC is sponsored through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Preparedness Directorate. It is the principal vehicle through which DHS develops and delivers training to state and local emergency responders.

The consortium is comprised of several preparedness training centers: the Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology; the National Center for Biomedical Research and Training at Louisiana State University; the National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center of Texas A&M University System’s Texas Engineering Extension Service; the National Exercise, Test, and Training Center at the Nevada Test Site; the Center for Domestic Preparedness; the Transportation Technology Center, Inc. in Colorado; and the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center at the University of Hawaii. Each organization has distinguished itself as having expertise across the gamut of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear explosive agents, as well as in all four homeland security mission areas of prevention, protection, response, and recovery. The NDPC provides advanced-level training to those involved in WMD and all-hazards catastrophic events.

Since its establishment in 1998, the NDPC’s impact on national preparedness has been substantial. The NDPC has conducted training in all 50 states and each U.S. territory. This training has benefited more than one million people since 1998. Today, the consortium’s programs meet the training and education needs of more than 60,000 emergency responders a year. The consortium combines the missions of its members with a commitment to provide a threat-responsive, long-term national capability and capacity to execute and sustain education, training, testing, and exercise programs.

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