NCBRT Partners to Create Innovative Training Model

In today’s tough economic times, many agencies across the country are faced with the dilemma of providing additional training for its first responders while dealing with the reality of budget cuts and personnel losses. As the demands of the state and local authorities increase, a more dispersed and flexible training model is needed to guide future efforts.

In an effort to meet these demands, the National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT) came together with Oklahoma state agencies to evaluate past efforts and generate new ideas. The organizations include the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security (OKOHS), the Oklahoma Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training (CLEET) and the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education (CT). This collaborative effort resulted in The Oklahoma Project (TOP).

The Oklahoma Project’s aim is to validate training effectiveness, cost efficiency and learning performance of instructor-lead course delivery in an unconventional format. This format includes video teletraining (VTT) and synchronized computer-based training.

Video teletraining is a blended learning environment in which participants are geographically separated and rely on electronic devices and applications for instructional delivery. VTT uses a set of interactive telecommunication technologies that allows two or more separately located training facilities to interact simultaneously via two-way video and audio transmissions. This type of training leverages limited resources and facilitates multi-jurisdictional training without costly travel.

“This is a means to address the required training in a cost effective and efficient manner,” says Associate Director of Operations and Plans at NCBRT, Steven Williams.

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There is no way to predict when, where or how the next terrorist attack will occur. We do know that terrorists’ weapons include a range of lethal tools—biological or chemical agents, nuclear weapons and conventional bombs contaminated with radioactive materials. Explosives and incendiary devices have been the most common weapons used by terrorists and many experts believe that explosives will continue to be the most likely weapon used by terrorists.

The Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center at New Mexico Tech (New Mexico Tech/EMRTC), the NDPC’s lead partner for explosives, live explosives and incendiary devices training, recognizes the critical nature of our training programs for our nation’s homeland security. In 2009, approximately 37,000 emergency responders completed New Mexico Tech/EMRTC’s training in response to incidents involving explosives. Evaluations completed by course participants show that the knowledge, skills and abilities of the instructors, in addition to the timely course content, help to create a successful training experience.

This comes as no real surprise as New Mexico Tech/EMRTC’s training program sets high standards for its instructors. The majority of instructors have responded to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) incidents and many are currently working in the emergency response field. In addition, to be credible to the course participants, each must be a seasoned trainer with knowledge of adult learning principals, and possess the research abilities to stay abreast of current threats.

Generally, the course participants have minimal knowledge of explosives and varying learning styles. Working in teams of three, instructors utilize a variety of strategies to ensure participants understand all course material. They review pre-tests to gauge participant background knowledge, consult with one another daily to discuss course progression and provide time to all participants for questions or concerns.

A recent graduate of the course, Incident Response to Terrorist Bombings, commented, “If knowledge is power, I will be going back to my station a very powerful man. The investment made in this course—the tax dollars—is money well spent. I couldn’t have learned so much, so quickly without these instructors.”

For more information visit our Web site at www.emrtc.nmt.edu/training.

DHS/FEMA Group Meets at Emergency Operations Training Center in Texas

Department of Homeland Security/FEMA (DHS/FEMA) officials and Federal Preparedness Coordinators got to see firsthand the value of the training and facilities offered through the Texas Engineering Extension Service/National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center’s (TEEX/NERRTC) portion of the Homeland Security National Training Program.

Fifty-five homeland security planning and training personnel attended the DHS/FEMA Regional Quarterly Coordination Meeting, which was hosted by TEEX at the Emergency Operations Training Center (EOTC) in College Station, Texas, on March 2-4.

The two-and-a-half-day meeting included a briefing on TEEX by Associate Director Bill May and tours of Disaster City® and Brayton Fire Training Field. Meeting participants also toured the EOTC and observed an ongoing Enhanced Incident Management/Unified Command course, which is funded by the DHS/FEMA Homeland Security National Training Program.

“They got to see a grant-funded class in session, and we got to demonstrate the value of TEEX/NERRTC training,” said Al Davis, Director of TEEX Homeland Security Services. “Most of these participants had never visited TEEX or seen the EOTC before. This peaked their interest. They walked away impressed with our facilities and our people, and the need for more regional and state homeland security training in venues like ours.”

Davis said TEEX’s National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center is the third member of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium to host the Regional Quarterly Coordination Meeting.
“The more rural areas of the state have truly benefited from this project because it has reduced their driving time to a typical training site from 3-5 hours to 30 minutes.”

The training courses utilized for the VTT are provided by the NCBRT. They include Preparedness and Response to Agroterrorism: Awareness Level, Awareness and Response to Biological Events and Law Enforcement Prevention and Deterrence of Terrorist Acts with additional courses being added. For each course delivery, there is an instructor(s) at the broadcast and remote training sites to proctor the training and assume instructional duties if technical difficulties arise.

A new platform being BETA tested for training is Elluminate Live®, which provides a real-time, interactive virtual classroom.

This platform is specifically for live, multi-media collaboration, which utilizes a unique Collaborative Communications Framework (CCF) to ensure participants are in sync, regardless of computer model or Internet connection speed. The technology provides a means for all participants to obtain a richer, more interactive learning experience. This includes two-way audio, multipoint video, shared whiteboards, application sharing, interactive recording and breakout rooms.

“This project has reached members of the law enforcement, firefighter and EMS community,” says Walt Birdsong, Interactive Tel-Conference Training Coordinator for CLEET. “Barriers are being broken, partnerships have been made and emergency services for the first time are able to train together, thus they all get the same information at the same time, and it is delivered around the state. This project must succeed and expand to include all 50 states in the union.”

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**Students Drive Training Procedures in CDP’s Hazard Assessment and Response Management (HARM) Course**

Hands-on training that provides both mental and physical challenges to emergency responders is difficult to duplicate. Few training courses require students to demonstrate solid response skills, while providing parameters and developing plans for a hazardous materials or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) response.

The Hazard Assessment and Response Management (HARM) course is the first course of its kind at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), located in Anniston, Ala. The HARM course provides response personnel with a scenario, but the students determine the tempo, and plan their response.

“All CDP courses have instructors directly involved with training,” explained Rick Dickson, assistant director of training delivery. “In HARM our instructors step back, let the students make the decisions. Sometimes the students meet with difficulty; other times they succeed immediately; ultimately, the information and learning tools they gain are invaluable,” he added.

The goal of the HARM course is to provide the responders with a realistic operational WMD environment in which the students operate within the incident command system, and decide procedures, equipment and tactical approach to an emergency event.

“We were forced to work in a unified command,” said Sue McManus, Memphis, Tenn., Fire Department. “If we had a real incident we would work with multiple agencies and jurisdictions,” she added. “Most agencies do not practice like this, and should. Any real event will be similar to this experience.”

This three-day course consists of up to 45 responders from multiple disciplines and multiple jurisdictions, with different levels of training and experience. The students appoint their incident commander and determine response elements based on the number of students and response background of each person.

“These responders have a familiarity from previous nerve agent training, but today they make entry into a toxic agent environment, locate the threat using the tools they have chosen and render the location safe. All the while our instructors maintain a comfortable distance, note observations, provide critical feedback and ensure the student responders operate safely,” said Dickson.

Learn more about the CDP at [http://cdp.dhs.gov](http://cdp.dhs.gov).
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), 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 of these organizations has distinguished themselves nationally as experts 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 a million people since 1998.

Today, the consortium’s various programs meet the training and education needs of more than 60,000 emergency responders each year. The consortium combines the missions of all its members with a commitment to provide a focused, threat-responsive, long-term national capability and capacity to execute and sustain comprehensive education, training, testing and exercise programs.

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