



III. OPERATIONAL READINESS

Operational readiness is the ability of a unit or system to fully execute the missions or functions for which it is designed. In the homeland security context, this requires giving responders the tools, training and support they need to do their job. DHS' National Preparedness Goal identifies several elements that are required to fully develop capabilities and achieve a state of operational readiness: Planning; Organization and Leadership; Equipment and Systems; Training; Exercises, Evaluations and Corrective Actions; and Personnel (POETEP).

Planning

The FDNY develops written intra-departmental procedures and plans at various levels of detail, including standard operating procedures (SOPs) for specific tactics, incident action plans for special events (e.g., parades, concerts, etc.) and emergency response plans (ERPs) for all-hazard and complex incident scenarios. The Department also contributes to the development of City-wide response plans for special events and incident scenarios. Through collaboration in the City-wide planning process, the FDNY provides expertise to the response plan design and gains a

better understanding of the Department's role in the response matrix. The Department will continue to rely on both internal and external subject matter experts to participate in drafting and updating emergency response plans and standard operating procedures for all likely response scenarios.

In addition to incident response plans, the Department currently is creating a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The COOP will provide Department administrators with a menu of options regarding how to proceed should any section(s) of the Department's support functions be crippled or disabled. The COOP will be critical in maintaining effective and efficient support services for Department operations, especially if the administrative disruption is a product of a physical incident that requires a sustained operational response. The COOP will outline the protocols and functions of the Crisis Task Force, a group composed of high-level FDNY personnel who will coordinate initial FDNY actions during any type of incident or other high-profile emergency. The COOP also will provide a "succession plan" for determining successors in the chain of command in the event that primary personnel are unavailable or become casualties of the disaster incident.

Organization and Leadership

The overall organization of preparedness efforts--including writing response plans, conducting risk assessments and developing exercises--is organized and managed by the FDNY Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness (CTDP). The CTDP staff members work closely with other Department operational and administrative units to ensure their efforts are coordinated, comprehensive and consistent. Staff members regularly report progress to the FDNY Commissioner.

Organizational leadership is also an important focus of the FDNY. The Department has developed several advanced management and leadership education programs for FDNY Officers, including the Fire Department Officers Management Institute or FOMI (conducted by Columbia University) and the FDNY/United States Military Academy (USMA) Combating Terrorism Leadership Course (developed and conducted in collaboration with the USMA at West Point). Additionally, several FDNY Officers have attended the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) Masters program in Security Studies. These programs provide Department leaders with the skills they need to effectively manage the FDNY's complex terrorism and disaster preparedness initiatives.

The Strategy and its prescribed overall terrorism and disaster preparedness system will serve as a useful tool for Department leaders to identify and prioritize capability goals and ensure corresponding needs are being met through future initiatives. The ability to identify and prioritize goals will be fostered through the continuing management and leadership education provided by the Columbia University, USMA and NPS educational programs.

Equipment and Systems

Sound logistics management is needed to ensure members have the requisite equipment and supplies to execute operations. FDNY equipment and systems will continue to be developed to support operational enhancements. The Department is working to build a stronger Marine firefighting and response fleet, procure the needed cache of search and rescue apparatus and equipment within each of the City's five boroughs and acquire specialized rail tunnel firefighting and response vehicles. The Department also is working on the development of new chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) bunker gear that will allow Firefighters to immediately enter a hazardous material environment to rescue victims--without the necessity of putting on additional chemical protective clothing--and a portable water supply system.

The FDNY will continue to explore and test new pieces of equipment and apparatus that could assist responders in their operations and enhance their safety. The development and implementation of a new Personal Safety System for all Firefighters is a recent example of an important safety achievement.

The Department also will continue to leverage technological opportunities to improve operations and safety. Under devel-

opment are enhancements for the FDNY's wireless Electronic Command Boards, as well as a Personnel Radio Frequency ID System, 3-D in-building tracking system, Personal Data Assistant-based data collection system for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) monitoring and a patient-tracking system.

An important system enhancement in the past five years--thanks in part to improved technology--involves the FDNY's communications capabilities. Central among interoperable communications equipment enhancements is the deployment of improved radios as part of an effective, three-component fire-ground communications system. Deploying a portable radio system to work within New York City's complex urban environment has been a critical challenge.

The Department will continue to work with the New York City Department of Information Technology & Telecommunications (DOITT) to develop a new radio infrastructure to allow for more powerful and reliable communications. The FDNY also will work with DOITT in the development of a new City-wide wireless system that will enable real-time sharing of voice, video, data and geospatial information across City, State and Federal agencies.

While the FDNY continues to enhance available equipment and systems, it is also necessary to protect existing physical resources. Target hardening of Department resources will include enhancing security measures at several of the Department's facilities, including training academies, administrative offices and apparatus storage sites. The infiltration of any of these sites could create serious threats to the Department's ability to function.

Training

FDNY training initiatives focus on enhancing core capabilities and strengthening specialized skills within fire operations, haz mat, search and rescue, emergency medical services and other specialized areas. Training standards for the Department are incredibly high and, in most cases, exceed national standards of performance.



During the past several years, the FDNY has developed an Incident Management curriculum to fully integrate the Incident Command System and the National Incident Management System into FDNY operations. The Department also has dedicated resources toward ensuring that all FDNY personnel are able to safely operate at a haz-mat incident. All FDNY fire personnel are trained at least to the HazMat Operations level and soon all emergency medical service personnel also will have that level of training at a minimum.

The Department has institutionalized counterterrorism training into the standard emergency response curriculum for all personnel. Such training enhances members' ability to maintain a high level of situational awareness for secondary dangers during the conduct of standard operations. This training will continue with the content evolving, based on new credible threats. Refresher training and Department-wide bulletins also will conform to the changing threat environment to keep members abreast of new dangers and guard against complacency in the absence of new incidents.

Providing all members with the appropriate firefighting, medical care, search and rescue, counterterrorism, incident management and haz-mat training will continue to be a top priority. Additional training initiatives to enhance specific capabilities also will continue to be pursued, including baseline and advanced haz-mat training for Fire and EMS members; technical rescue and Paramedic training for several units; and a Captain's Command course to provide Captains with strategic management techniques for responding to terrorist incidents.

Just as important as providing members with the requisite training is ensuring they sustain and hone their knowledge and skills. This will be accomplished through continued refresher training via the deployment of Competency Units--special units tasked with testing the skills of field personnel to ensure they are able to appropriately execute the tasks they have been assigned.

Exercises, Evaluations and Corrective Actions

Training efforts are reinforced and operational skills are tested in a realistic, simulated environment through frequent tabletop, functional and full-scale exercises. These exercises are designed following Department of Homeland Security guidelines.

The FDNY has created an Exercise Design Team comprised of 40 members who successfully completed the Federal Emergency Management Agency's three-week Master Exercise Practitioner (MEP) course at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Following the MEP exercise design model has led to great success in enabling FDNY leaders to rigorously test Department capabilities within complex response conditions. The in-house exercise design model also has proved highly cost-effective, enabling the Department to conduct numerous exercises at a fraction of the cost required by outside consultants.

Many of the exercises designed and conducted by the FDNY are developed in collaboration with other local agencies

and the private sector. The Department also contributes to the development of inter-departmental exercises involving multiple City, regional, State and national responder partners. Participation in exercises with other responders and property owners/operators outside the FDNY helps to build valuable relationships, provides a forum for sharing best practices and fosters coordinated efforts among different agencies and organizations.

After an exercise has been conducted or an actual major incident has occurred, the FDNY performs an after-action review to identify the lessons learned and actions that can be taken to enhance preparedness for future events. The after-action review results in the creation of a written After Action Report (AAR) to evaluate the effectiveness of and adherence to standard operating procedures.

Based on an analysis of the AAR findings, an Improvement Plan is written, which incorporates and expands upon AAR recommendations and conclusions. FDNY procedures and protocols are researched and alternative courses of action are explored as a part of the improvement plan development. The final improvement plan includes recommendations on training, equipment or procedural changes; recommendations that address what could have been done better; identification of circumstances not covered or anticipated in the Department's strategies and tactics; and finally, a detailed work plan regarding how to implement the lessons learned and ensure that these lessons are properly communicated to the field.

Personnel

The DHS definition of personnel is "staff who meet relevant qualifications and standards necessary to perform assigned missions and tasks."²⁴ Personnel quality will matter as never before as emergency responders confront a variety of missions and are called to adapt to new threats. The high skill level and dedication of the Fire Department's 15,000+ member work force sets a new level of excellence in qualifications and standards.

During the past five years, FDNY members have had to recover from great losses and rebuild. Through great strength, determination and selfless dedication to protecting the safety of others, they have continued to exhibit the Department's core values of service, bravery and honor, and rebuilt a Department on which New York City can depend and exhibit pride.

Guarding the safety and health of FDNY and other emergency response personnel before, during and after major operations is imperative to enabling the FDNY to perform all of its core capabilities, fulfill its mission of life safety and contribute to the success of incident management and mitigation. At the scene of an incident or during a high-profile special event, the safety and security of FDNY and all responding personnel are enhanced by the work of the FDNY Bureau of Fire Investigation. BFI Fire Marshals assist local law enforcement in providing perimeter security and protecting emergency responders from secondary attacks, as well as enhancing situational awareness for Incident Commanders through keen observation from a security perspective.

During a major incident, a dedicated FDNY unit--Safety Battalion 1--responds to the incident scene and monitors operations for safety concerns. The FDNY Chief of Safety is responsible for supervising and coordinating all safety and health investigations required by Department regulations and/or applicable City, State or Federal law. The Chief of Safety also is charged with instituting, implementing and monitoring safety and accident prevention programs for the uniformed and civilian work force, as well as the development and implementation of a Risk Management Plan for the Department.

The FDNY Bureau of Health Services (BHS) oversees the health and wellness of the uniformed members of the Department. The BHS has played a key role in the evaluation and care of members after disasters. In the aftermath of 9/11, the BHS and the Department's Counseling Services Unit provided numerous medical evaluations and treatment programs to help maintain the health of FDNY members. In response to the FDNY's major deployment to assist with Hurricane Katrina response operations, the BHS ensured that members were prepared with required immunizations. Risk factors were reviewed and, upon their return, members were given follow-up exams.

The BHS tracks all instances of exposure and disease appearing in emergency responder personnel to ensure appropriate preventive or curative countermeasures are implemented. This enables members to continue performing their life safety duties without jeopardizing their own personal health. In the case of an incident involving a biological agent, FDNY members will require a rapid receipt of countermeasures to protect their health and safety.

To address this need, the Department has developed a BioPod (biological points of distribution) program to ensure the necessary protocols are in place and the equipment and supplies are available for an FDNY-wide distribution of prophylactic medications/vaccines after a biological exposure. A similar smallpox program also has been developed in conjunction with the Centers for Disease Control, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and other local agencies. With the threat of a pandemic, such as the avian flu, the initiative will be expanded to include the ability to mass-inoculate responders for any type of exposure or outbreak that may jeopardize their personal health and ability to perform their operations.

