



# RESEARCH FOUNDATION

RESEARCH FOR THE NFPA MISSION

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### Economic and Emotional Impact of Active Shooter / Hostile Events

23 October 2019

**Background:** All public safety departments in the United States must recognize the possibility that they may be called upon to respond to an active shooter event. From major urban areas, like Las Vegas NV and Orlando FL, to small hamlets like Sutherland Springs TX, communities of all sizes and demographics are now represented in the cities and towns that have had to respond to and recover from these traumas. All public safety departments are ultimately impacted.

At the same time, local decision makers are increasingly seeking better data to demonstrate the value of budgeting decisions. Where that information is lacking, needs often go unaddressed. Better information on costs—and recommendations on preparedness, training, and recovery practices that may mitigate those costs—will help public safety leaders justify the investment of more resources to be ready for active shooter and hostile event type incidents. The weak link that demands to be addressed is the lack of information needed to get more resources to help public safety departments mitigate their costs associated with these types of events.

Active shooter and hostile events have become an unfortunate reality in American life. In 2018 alone, public safety departments have responded to at least eight of these incidents around the country (according to data published by the Washington Post of shootings where four or more people were killed by a lone shooter). These tragedies deeply impact the victims and leave profound marks on entire communities. In addition, they uniquely impact the public safety officers, including firefighters and emergency medical personnel, whose duties bring them into direct contact with these horrific traumas.

As well [documented in the press](#) after the 2016 Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, a number of emergency personnel involved in the response to that event suffered lasting mental health impacts. This toll is felt acutely by the individual sufferer, but it is also felt by the departments, which must bear the costs associated with expanded mental health resources, staff turnovers, early retirements, and staff reassignments.

The deliverables from this project will be used to quantify the economic impacts on public safety departments, including with the long-term emotional impact on personnel. Highlighting these costs can help build the justification to obtain the resources to plan and train for all phases of active shooter and hostile events, including the recovery phase. The project will: (1) Identify the relevant impacts on public safety departments, as well as available data and methodologies to estimate their costs in dollars; (2) Develop a framework to benchmark costs, and identify gaps in data; (3) Relying on the framework, complete three case studies, selecting communities of different sizes and demographic compositions; (4) Establish recommendations for planning, training, and recovery for active shooter and hostile event

response that could help reduce or avoid costs; and (5) Disseminate methodology/framework, case studies, and recommendations in appropriate venues.

**Research Goal:** The overall project goal is to establish a sustainable quantification approach to measure the economic and emotional impact of events that are addressed by Active Shooter Hostile Event Response (ASHER) programs. The objectives are: 1) Establish valid economic measures for public safety departments; 2) Quantify short and long term emotional impact on emergency responders; 3) Justify resources needed for preparedness, training, equipment, & other critical needs; and 4) Support use of NFPA 3000, *Standard for an Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER) Program*.

**Project Tasks:** This project is composed of five tasks:

**Task 1 Project Initiation.** This task will be led by the Fire Protection Research Foundation and include the establishment of project technical panel with a target minimum of eight key stakeholders for this project. The project team will convene to confirm all pertinent details, including timeline, project tasks, scope, project goal and anticipated deliverables. The members of the panel will include representatives from the fire service, law enforcement, emergency medical services (EMS), and other key organizational representatives. The panel will also include representatives from the technical committee for NFPA 3000.

**Task 2 Baseline Materials.** The Research Foundation will identify and confirm a contractor with appropriate skills and abilities to develop and refine all baseline materials used for this effort. They will have the responsibility for the collection of all applicable literature and data, and provide appropriate analysis and documentation. They will identify impacts, the available data, the needed data, and potential methodologies. This will include a:

- a. Full literature review, including interviews with public safety department leadership and publicly available records. This will identify and categorize the types of impacts experienced by public safety departments in the aftermath of responding to these events.
- b. Identify data (and potential sources of data) needed to quantify the impacts.
- c. Review relevant literature to support applicable economic analysis methodologies/frameworks that could be used to quantify these impacts, and to recommend a methodology/framework for use in case studies.
- d. Provide an interim report to the project technical panel identifying the proposed impacts within the scope of the analysis, available data sources, and recommended economic analysis methodology or framework for case studies.
- e. Identify and conduct a case study analysis on three different jurisdictions. These communities should have public safety departments willing to participate; be of varying sizes and demographic characteristics; and have experienced an event that could be addressed by an ASHER program. Collect the data required by the framework and estimate the cumulative cost of the ASHER event to the public safety department.

**Task 3 Evaluation.** The Research Foundation will lead this effort to plan, implement, and document a workshop with members of emergency responder organizations to review the draft content developed in Task 2. This in-person meeting will bring together the project technical panel and additional stakeholders to review and provide direct feedback on the draft project deliverables. The workshop will review the proposed methodologies, identify perceived gaps, prioritize actionable needs, and generate recommended enhancements to approaches for quantifying short- and long-term measures due to economic and emotional impact. The workshop proceedings will include all applicable documentation.

**Task 4 Finalize Project Deliverables.** Based on the feedback and guidance from the workshop, the project research team will further revise and update the project deliverables and generate enhanced versions of the baseline materials. This material will be reviewed by the panel for feedback on final adjustments and enhancements to the project deliverables.

**Task 5 Final Reporting and Outreach.** The final project deliverables will include a demonstrated methodology for evaluating the economic and emotional impact of events addressed by an ASHER program. This will also include the documentation for the project workshop. All of this will be available on a web platform. In addition, an executive summary report will be generated that documents the overall effort. Access to these final project deliverables will be open. The availability of the materials will be broadly circulated through the extensive outreach venues of the project partners.

**Implementation:** This research program will be conducted under the auspices of the Research Foundation in accordance with Foundation Policies and will be guided by a project technical panel who will provide input to the project, recommend contractor selection, review periodic reports of progress and research results, and review the final project report.

**Schedule:** This is a two year effort with a final report expected in September 2021.

**About us:**

**About the Fire Protection Research Foundation**

The [Fire Protection Research Foundation](#) plans, manages, and communicates research on a broad range of fire safety issues in collaboration with scientists and laboratories around the world. The Foundation is an affiliate of NFPA.



**About the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)**

Founded in 1896, NFPA is a global, nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. The association delivers information and knowledge through more than 300 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach and advocacy; and by partnering with others who share an interest in furthering the NFPA mission. [All NFPA codes and standards can be viewed online for free.](#) NFPA's [membership](#) totals more than 65,000 individuals around the world.

