PROJECT SUMMARY

Fire as a Weapon Integrated Response: Research-Based Training for Fire and Law Enforcement Personnel

30 September 2021

Background: Fire as a weapon (FAAW) is defined as the use of fire, smoke, or flammable materials normally used with other attack vectors (e.g., firearm) that complicate incident response and require integrated response tactics. A recent example is the attack in the Diamondhead neighborhood of Honolulu, HI on January 19, 2020. In this attack, a woman was stabbed, two officers were shot and killed, and seven homes were destroyed by fire. The complexity of the scene delayed fire personnel from battling the fire.

As this example shows, a FAAW event requires an integrated response between both fire and law enforcement (LE) personnel to combat the fire threat as well as the attack threat. Fire and LE personnel need to better understand what each group is doing, develop a plan to address the attacker and fire threat, and rescue victims of both attack vectors. The risks to first responders can be reduced through integrated training between fire and LE personnel. Integrated training will allow both fire and LE personnel to work as a cohesive unit.

In addition, no official FAAW dataset currently exists. This makes determining risk difficult. FAAW events are happening, but without a full picture, it is not possible to know how many first responders have been injured or killed because of FAAW events. As such, one of the components of this project is to create a national database of FAAW events and develop case studies of recent events.

This project, which is being undertaken and led by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) center at Texas State University, will address both a data and training gap for fire and LE personnel regarding FAAW in hopes of improving response and reducing risk to first responders.

Research Goal: The two primary goals of this project are: 1) conduct research on the Fire as a Weapon (FAAW) phenomenon, and 2) design and deliver an eLearning version of the already developed in-person FAAW Integrated Response course.

Implementation and Schedule: This research project is led by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) center at Texas State University with support from the Fire Protection

Research Foundation. Funding for this project is through a DHS/FEMA AFG Fire Grant with a targeted completion of September 2022.

Project Tasks:
Task 1 – Conduct a literature review of FAAW events and create a FAAW dataset. To create the dataset, open-source searches (e.g., LexisNexis, Google) will be conducted for events that match the FAAW definition. The research team will contact all agencies that responded to these events to request official information regarding the details of the event. This process has been successfully used by ALERRT and the FBI in the creation and maintenance of the active shooter dataset. Task 1 will be completed in months 1-3.

Task 2 - Design and deliver eLearning FAAW Integrated Response (FAAWIR) course. The eLearning FAAWIR course will be based on an already existing in-person training program developed by ALERRT. The development process will also begin in month 1. A technical panel, facilitated by the Fire Protection Research Foundation will assist in development of the story board to condense the 16-hour in-person FAAWIR to a 4-hour eLearning format.

An in-person FAAWIR course will be hosted to gather video footage of instruction and scenarios for use in the eLearning platform. Primary eLearning development will take seven months (months 2-8). Month 9 will entail a limited rollout of the eLearning course to SMEs for feedback. A workshop, facilitated by the Foundation, will be held with additional stakeholders to get feedback on the course.

Adjustments will be made during month 10, and month 11 will consist of reviewing and approving all eLearning material. The FAAWIR eLearning course will be active at the beginning of month 12. The final report detailing the research and training materials will be drafted and completed by the end of the month 12 prior to closeout. ALERRT and NFPA will market the training opportunity to our large fire and LE audiences via newsletter, website, and email notifications.

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.

About the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center
The ALERRT Center at Texas State University was founded in 2002 to address the need for active shooter response training for first responders and has since trained more than 130,000 first responders nationwide. Utilizing the train-the-trainer model, the ALERRT curriculum has been adopted by numerous states and federal agencies as their standard active shooter training. ALERRT's research department works to evaluate and enhance the overall understanding of active shooter events and assist in improving law enforcement best practices via ongoing empirical research endeavors. In 2013, ALERRT was named the National Standard in Active Shooter Response Training by the FBI. ALERRT hosts a national integrated response conference each fall and is the only national conference bridging the law enforcement, Fire and EMS responses to active shooter / attack events.