



Tuesday, September 8, 2015
Testimony of FDNY Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security
Field Hearing On Confronting Terror Challenges In A Post 9/11 World

The FDNY's primary mission is to protect life and property. The Department carries out this mission through firefighting, search and rescue, pre-hospital patient care, and hazardous materials mitigation. The planning, training, and equipment mentioned below can be applied in any mass casualty situation, whether a terrorist attack, natural disaster, industrial accident, pandemic outbreak, or biological event.

Preparedness Core Values

The Department builds systems, like our Tiered Response System, which can be scaled and adapted to ensure the right mix of resources and expertise, depending on the type of incident or emergency. The Department also builds systems of collaboration, partnering with other City agencies and regional responders to share lessons learned, and to develop interagency plans, protocols, and drills. Members of the Department have acquired a tremendous amount of knowledge and know-how since 9/11, and this knowledge is helping the City plan and prepare for extreme hazards and emergencies. The Department has also invested in specialized training facilities—revamping our Fire and EMS Academies—and environments, like our Shipboard Simulator and our Subway Simulator. These tools not only serve the FDNY, but are considered City and regional resources.

The Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness

At the core of these preparedness efforts is the Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness (CTDP). We created the Center in 2004 to be the focal point for the Department's strategic preparedness, creating dynamic and practical approaches to counterterrorism, disaster response, and consequence management. The development of CTDP came out of the 9/11 McKinsey After Action Report (AAR).

The Center's core competencies include: intelligence sharing, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and security preparedness, exercise design, emergency response planning, education, strategy and technology.

Intelligence-sharing: The intelligence branch of the Center has expanded the FDNY's role to become an active producer of intelligence tailored to the needs of firefighters and emergency responders. The Department uses a PC and web-based communication tool - Diamond Plate - to deliver critical training and situational awareness content directly to firehouses and EMS stations in real-time. With firehouses and EMS stations located throughout the City, this tool has helped the Department leverage technology to share information and to break down distances. In recent months, this platform has been a key resource to disseminate information to our first responders on Ebola and Legionnaires' Disease—videos, information, procedures and safety protocols—and to share messages with our entire workforce.

WMD and Security Preparedness: The primary mission of the Center's WMD branch is to coordinate strategy and tactics, and share chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive research. For example, we are currently working with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to collect, share,

and map radiological data during radiation emergencies, which will allow our commanders in the field and at the FDOC to visualize contaminated areas. We have also strategically deployed a stockpile of WMD medical counter-measures in EMS stations and hospitals, and we also train and carry WMD antidote kits on every 911 ambulance and fire apparatus.

Exercise Design: CTDTP conducts workshops, tabletops, functional, and full-scale exercises to test the knowledge and efficacy of the Department's all-hazards response protocols. CTDTP also makes recommendations on improvements in detailed after-action reports. The CTDTP has partnered with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), NYPD, NYC Office of Emergency Management, the West Point Combating Terrorism Leadership Center, and the Centers for Disease Control to plan and prepare exercises for natural, accidental, and terrorist events. On average, CTDTP runs 35-40 preparedness exercises each year.

Emergency Preparedness: The Center creates and updates emergency response plans to provide both general and detailed tactical direction for units responding to terrorist events and natural disasters. As part of this planning, the Center helps develop and maintain the FDNY's continuity of operations plans. This team has developed plans for the following events: Haz-Mat release, subway chemical attack, bio-response, improvised explosive device, collapse rescue, and hurricanes. As mentioned above, the Department is also building systems of collaboration. An example of this is the work that the FDNY and the NYPD are doing to respond to a large-scale Active Shooter Mass Casualty Incident (MCI). The FDNY/NYPD have worked together to develop a "Response to Active Shooter Incidents" emergency response plan, and have begun conducting drills on the plan.

One of our concerns is the use of fire as a weapon. The devastating 2008 attacks in Mumbai represent a game-changer. Over three days, a city of nearly 14 million was held hostage while 166 people were murdered in multiple locations, introducing a new model for terrorist attacks. The salient features of a Mumbai-style attack include multiple terrorists, multiple targets, and multiple modes of attack deployed over a prolonged operational period to amplify media attention. Despite all of the violence, the most iconic images from that event remain those of the Taj Mahal Hotel on fire. The pictures of people at the windows of the hotel trying to escape the flames are reminiscent of 9/11. Despite the striking images from that major attack, interest in using fire as either a strategic or a tactical weapon has not been well understood and largely ignored to date. However, it is a weapon that could significantly alter the dynamics of a terrorist attack. FDNY is working closely with NYPD, the FBI, and The Department of State's Diplomatic Security Services to develop the procedures for joint tactical teams – teams comprised of fire personnel and security forces operating together – in an environment with armed terrorists, fire and smoke, and mass casualties. All three agencies have been working with us in full scale exercises at the Fire Academy and more are being planned.

Special Operations Command

In addition to the extensive planning discussed above, the FDNY has significantly enhanced our Special Operations Command (SOC) capabilities, so that we are more prepared than ever to deal with incidents involving biological, chemical or radioactive releases, major structural collapses, maritime operations, and other major incidents with mass-casualty potential.

The underpinning of these enhancements is the "Tiered Response System" that we established to ensure the optimal availability and distribution of response resources. This tiered-response framework

entails training FDNY units in a variety of response capabilities at incremental proficiency levels and strategically locating those units across the City.

Let me illustrate this Tiered Response structure for hazardous material incidents. At the highest level - the Specialist Level - is our Hazardous Material Unit and Haz-Mat Battalion Chiefs who have over 600 hours of professional training and carry advanced instrumentations. The next level is comprised of 12 Haz-Mat Tech II Units and 39 Haz-Tac Ambulances. At the next level down we have 25 Haz-Mat Tech I Units, 25 Decontamination Engines and 29 Chemical Protective Clothing Ladder Companies who can operate in hazardous environments. At the foundation level, all fire and EMS personnel are trained on Haz-Mat/WMD operations. As you can see, our tiered response system provides a very robust structure for Haz Mat response and mitigation.

Our collapse search and rescue members are structured in a similar manner and receive the highest levels of training the Department offers in technical rescue and victim-removal, including more than 280 hours of specialized rescue training in collapse response and rescue operations.

Our Emergency Medical System, the largest in the US, is also tiered, starting with certified first responders, EMTs, paramedics, specialized rescue medics, and HazTac paramedics and HazTac EMTs.

The FDNY's Tiered Response System allows the Department to adapt to extreme events by creating Task Forces to give the City and the region highly trained teams that can rapidly respond to large-scale hazards and emergencies.

Organizational and Communications Infrastructure

Of course, enhanced capabilities are only one component of our preparedness goals. The Department has also taken steps to improve our organizational and communications infrastructures as well. The Department has:

- Developed a fully staffed and trained Incident Management Team (IMT), who played a key role in the Harlem and second avenue explosions.
- Launched an automated recall program that can target off-duty members to ensure resources are available to maintain coverage throughout the City during any emergency.
- Implemented a communications channel between on-scene firefighters and the EMS command.
- Implemented a second EMS citywide channel to handle concurrent Multiple Casualty Incidents.
- Developed and launched a Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) information and awareness campaign in firehouses and EMS stations.
- Implemented the Fire-ground Accountability Program (FGAP), which consists of a number of inter-related applications to enhance fire-ground safety and accountability.

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- We've made an investment in our workforce, providing senior Fire and EMS Officers with customized leadership and strategic-management training. This includes our Fire Officers Management Institute (FOMI)—partnering with GE and Columbia University—and our West Point Combatting Terrorism Leadership program. These programs help the Department build the next generation of leaders.

The Department has successfully deployed a three-part field communication system that represents a critical step in improved fire-ground communications. The system consists of 13 vehicle-based, cross-band repeaters, which allow radio signals to be transmitted into dense building environments; 75 high-powered portable command post radios; and pre-programmed handie-talkie radios with several customized features that have improved on-scene tactical and command communications and firefighter safety.

The FDNY has also built a state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center at FDNY Headquarters to enhance information sharing, command and control communications, and on-scene situational awareness capabilities. The Department is also completing a redundant back-up facility on Staten Island, which will serve as a fully functional back-up operations center where command and control personnel within the FDNY and first responders can plan, coordinate, and share relevant information with each other, and with other public safety agencies.

An element of this system is the concept of a Networked Command: Linking on-scene situational awareness capabilities with command and control-level operations at Emergency Operation Centers (EOC). Lastly, with the assistance of DHS and the Congressional Homeland Security Committee, FDNY has a secure room to receive and share classified Intelligence with DHS, the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Fusion Centers and Law Enforcement about the current threat environment. Information sharing is critical to prevention, preparedness and response.

Homeland Security Grant Funding

The FDNY cannot reinforce enough how critically important federal funding has been in supporting the initiatives outlined above. Since 9/11, the FDNY has worked to build partnerships with key funders—notably the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES). To these agencies, we have communicated the FDNY's unique role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and other complex emergencies. To date, the FDNY has been awarded over \$560 million in federal funding through DHS.

The FDNY has utilized DHS funds to rebuild after 9/11 and to prepare our first responders to manage the potential threats and hazards they face each day in the field. Grant funds support the equipment, planning, drills, technology, and training they need to prepare for and respond to these threats.

An example is the Times Square Car Bomb. Through their training, first responders from Engine 54 and Ladder 4 immediately recognized the threat potential of the smoking vehicle. They took actions that day that reduced injuries, protected property, and saved lives.

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During Super Storm Sandy, the FDNY fought devastating structural fires, responded to over 5,000 medical emergencies and rescued more than 500 residents. The FDNY was able to draw upon DHS-funded training and equipment during Super Storm Sandy operations.

A third example is the City's response to Ebola. In managing potential cases of EVD, the FDNY was able to draw upon a preparedness framework combining training, resources and drills that specialized units developed preparing for Bio-Terrorism threats. This includes operating in chemical protective clothing, which as an added benefit, also protects against blood-borne pathogens. DHS funds helped build and train the HazTac and HazMat Units that played a key role in the response, and supported the purchase of specialized PPE and resources that provide emergency medical transport, treatment and patient care. By investing in core areas—planning, incident management, leadership, communications, patient triage and treatment, Haz-Mat, marine firefighting, and search and technical rescue—we are better prepared today when disaster strikes. These capabilities served the Department and the City during the Times Square incident, during Super Storm Sandy, the building collapses in East Harlem and Second Avenue, the response to Ebola, and during the train derailment along the Metro North commuter rail line.

These capabilities are a resource to the City, and when called upon, the entire New York region.

Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak on these key topics, and reiterate that Fire Department resources can adapt to a changing threat environment. We have structured our core competencies to respond to routine and extreme events - including acts of terrorism.