

Testimony of Alphonse Davis
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Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Economic
Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management

“Disaster Preparedness: Disaster Recovery Reform Act Implementation and FEMA
Readiness”

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Good morning, Chairwoman Titus, Ranking Member Meadows, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Al Davis and I am Deputy Director of the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX). TEEX is a state agency and part of the Texas A&M University System.¹ Since 1998, TEEX has been a member of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC) and I am honored to serve as the NDPC’s current chairman.

History of the NDPC:

Established in 1998 in the aftermath of the bombing attack on the Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building, the NDPC’s mission is to enhance the preparedness of Federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal emergency response providers to reduce the nation’s vulnerability to all hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and other high-consequence events by developing, delivering, and assessing plans, training, technical assistance, and exercises.

The NDPC is Congressionally authorized and annually appropriated funding through the Homeland Security National Training Program to develop and deliver training for the Nation’s emergency responders within the context of all hazards; including chemical, biological, radiological, and explosive Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) hazards.

The NDPC is a unique partnership of seven members, including several nationally recognized universities and professional organizations. Our members include:

- The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Nevada National Security Site (NNSS), Counterterrorism Operations Support (CTOS)—Center for Radiological/Nuclear Training in Las Vegas, Nevada; competencies in the prevention, deterrence and response to radiological/nuclear attacks.

- The Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center (EMRTC) at New Mexico Tech (NMT) in Socorro, New Mexico; competencies in explosive and incendiary attacks.

¹ The Texas A&M University System is one of the largest systems of higher education in the nation, with a budget of \$4.7 billion. Through a statewide network of 11 universities and seven state agencies, the Texas A&M System educates more than 153,000 students and makes more than 22 million additional educational contacts through service and outreach programs each year. System-wide, research and development expenditures exceeded \$996 million in FY 2017 and helped drive the state’s economy.

- The National Emergency Response and Recovery Training Center (NERRTC) at the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX), a part of the Texas A & M University System (TAMUS) in College Station, Texas; competencies in incident management, health and medical services, public works, infrastructure protection, hazardous materials, threat and risk assessment, cybersecurity, executive programs, crisis communications, search and rescue, sport/special event risk and incident management, planning and training gap analysis.
- The National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT) Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; competencies in the prevention, deterrence and response to terrorist acts, law enforcement, biological and food defense/agricultural related terrorism response.
- The Security and Emergency Response Training Center (SERTC) at the Transportation Technology Center, Inc. (TTCI) in Pueblo, Colorado; competencies in hazardous materials and weapons of mass destruction responses for all forms of surface transportation.
- The National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC) at the University of Hawai'i (UH) in Honolulu, Hawai'i: competencies in natural hazard risks to coastal region, island and urban communities; natural disaster preparedness, response and recovery planning; and leveraging technology for disaster management applications.
- The Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS/FEMA) in Anniston, Alabama; competencies in prevention, deterrence and response to chemical, biological, and nuclear attacks involving hazardous materials.

NDPC: A National Training Resource

Since its inception in 1998, the members of the NDPC have worked tirelessly to prepare the nation for the possibility of catastrophic disasters, training more than three million first responders and receivers, emergency managers, governmental officials and staff members, and their critical infrastructure partners in every state and in each territory.

The NDPC is an entity with deep experience, demonstrable expertise, unique competencies, and a long-standing relationship with DHS/FEMA; one which is trusted by state, local, tribal, and territorial jurisdictions. It supports the national training program mandate to identify, develop, test, and deliver homeland security training to all emergency disciplines.

NDPC resources include:

- Established and mature training infrastructure (e.g., people, training sites, products, processes and systems)
 - Unique training facilities
 - Significant human capital at all levels:
 - 1,138 Subject Matter Professional instructors from across the nation

- Certified Training and Development Professionals
 - Professional Instructional Design and Subject Matter Curriculum Development Teams
 - Direct access to academia – including advanced research in core competency areas
- Courses that meet and/or exceed FEMA certified curriculum and instructor qualification criteria requirements and support community lifeline sustainment
 - Consistency, effectiveness, and efficiency enabled through centralized management with decentralized training and course deliveries.
 - Partnerships between NDPC members, academic organizations, and with multiple other Federal Agencies and professional responder associations.
 - Continuous improvement via course participant feedback, course evaluations, needs assessments and regularly scheduled course reviews and updates.

Keeping up with Evolving Threats by Building Capabilities

Today, responders from various disciplines must work together to respond to a myriad of emergencies including natural disasters, active shooters and complex coordinated attacks, among others. By responding together, the number of casualties can be reduced. This requires seamless coordination, which can only be accomplished by planning and training for such emergencies together. NDPC courses give responders and the whole community the opportunity to train together, so they can work together during an emergency to save more lives.

The NDPC has the ability and willingness to continually evolve and be immediately responsive to the unique first responder/receiver training needs of each state through cooperation and coordination with each State Administrative Agency (SAA). The NDPC provides each state with targeted and needed first responder/receiver training to address current gaps and strengthen its identified core capability needs, thus enhancing our nation's preparedness.

Just In Time Training to Protect our Responders

Immediately after the U.S. Ebola fatality in Dallas, TX, CDP received the mission to develop a course on the safe and effective use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by emergency responders operating in an infectious disease environment. The development team immediately consulted with subject matter experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and within three days designed and developed an eight hour course. This process normally takes at least 160 hours.

The course was very successful and the demand for training quickly outpaced the CDP's ability to deliver enough courses. To address the high demand for the training, the team subsequently partnered with other members of the NDPC to deliver training across the country. All seven NDPC member organizations mobilized to offer the course across the country to reach as many personnel as possible in the following year. Several members are still delivering the course today when it's requested.

Active Shooter Training

In one example of the value of training designed for emerging threats, the NDPC has several courses that specifically address the need to improve the integration of law

enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services in the response to active shooter events. Courses on active threat integrated response, law enforcement active shooter emergency response, and active shooter incident management are several examples of training delivered in Las Vegas prior to the tragic events of October 1, 2017 on the Las Vegas strip.

Developing Recovery Training

Following the 2017 hurricanes and the devastating impact of the storms on territories and states including Puerto Rico, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama and Texas, the need for training on recovery was identified. As response to the storms ended and recovery began, it became clear that many of the impacted communities were not prepared with the knowledge and skills they needed to quickly aid recovery from such catastrophic events. NDPC members acted quickly by developing courses on damage assessment, debris management, planning and resilience. The training provides the knowledge and skills necessary to enhance and adopt existing plans to better address recovery for the whole community, encouraging coordinated planning and public/private partnerships to support critical infrastructure resilience. The courses also assist communities in identifying and recognizing disaster recovery program resources, informing them of public assistance options and the methods to access those programs. State and local communities identified training needs at all levels, for individual community members, planners and administrative staff, as well as senior elected officials.

Continuous Contact and Engagement with FEMA Partners and the Emergency Management Community

We have strong relationships with our FEMA partners and work closely with them to address long-term trends that influence national preparedness; collaborating to design and deliver training that closes critical training gaps. Our partnerships and relationships with federal agencies extend beyond our primary FEMA partners, to departments and agencies with resources and responsibilities related to our training, ensuring accuracy, alignment and relevance to national priorities.

The NDPC actively works with a SAA Advisory Council made up of 12 state representatives, one territorial representative and one tribal representative. The Council and the NDPC meet regularly, actively working together to ensure training needs and gaps are identified, assisting us in creating and delivering training that is truly needed. This continuous engagement also provides valuable insight and feedback on the impact of training, supporting our continued efforts to evaluate and improve training.

Training Gap Analysis

As a result of the close relationships with the states and the state training points of contact responsible for identifying training needs, the NDPC developed a training gap analysis course: “Readiness: Training Identification and Preparedness Planning (RTIPP)”, a whole community approach to creating an effective training plan that identifies and catalogs training goals, prioritizes training efforts, develops improvement plans, and implements a course of action. Communities report that the training was “long overdue for local jurisdictions to make honest and meaningful assessments of our training and readiness gaps.” (R. Land, Columbus, GA)

We also have strong relationships with many of the professional associations in the field of emergency management, including some of those represented by my esteemed fellow panelists here today:

- National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)
- International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)
- National Association of Counties (NACo)

As well as many other associations critical to our mission and audience including, but not limited to:

- National Sheriffs Association (NSA)
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- International Association of Fire Fighters

And many more...

Looking forward:

In closing, I would like to thank you again for inviting me to testify on behalf of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium. I want to underscore the importance of each individual in every discipline, the national responder and local, county, tribal, territorial and state organizations and our collective corps of NDPC subject matter professionals; without them, we don't have a mission or reason to exist. Similarly, I want to acknowledge the efforts of our partners in creating a culture of preparedness; namely, the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium, the National Cybersecurity Preparedness Consortium and certainly the various organizational components of DHS/FEMA. It is an honor to serve with them all.