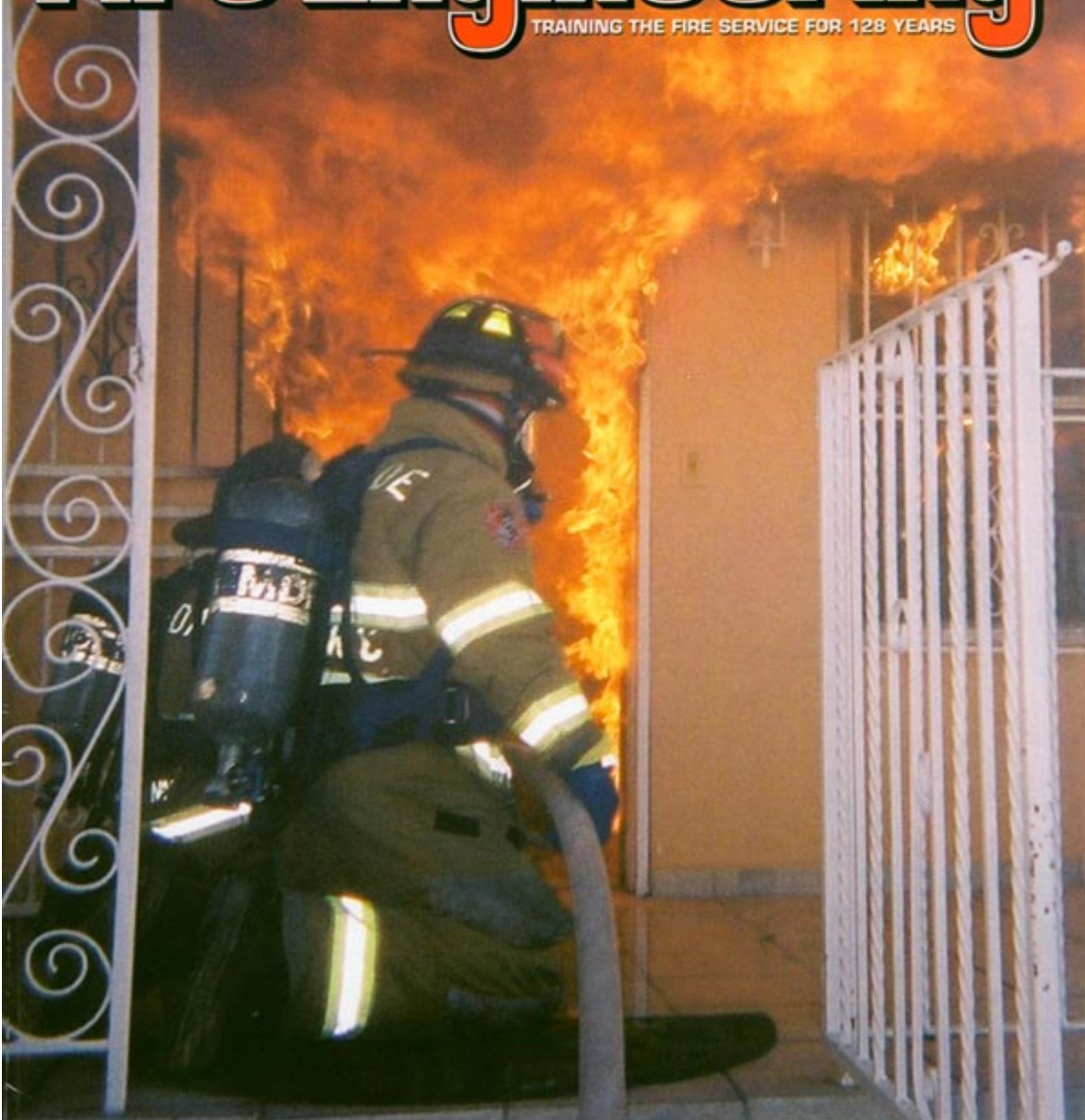


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TECHNOLOGY ROUNDUP, P. 67



STANDPIPE OPERATIONS, P. 79



THE COVER: Miami Dade (FL) firefighters prepare a 1½-inch handline for rapid advancement into a one-story residential occupancy. Occupancy rooms in this area are typically equipped with security bars that keep crime out but also trap occupants behind them, removing a secondary exit at the rear of the fire. Use solid stream patterns to prevent as much heat as possible from encapsulating the occupants until firefighters can make alternate entry to complete the primary search. (Photo by Hector Cruz.)

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# PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE: THE OHIO SYSTEM

BY WILLIAM VEDRA JR.

**T**HE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, HAVE TAUGHT our country a number of important lessons. The lessons learned have become the foundation of many new homeland security initiatives. Establishing national strategies, preparedness goals, and planning scenarios are just a few of the initiatives providing direction to the thousands of responders across the United States. These initiatives present a welcome opportunity to standardize policies, equipment, and response across the country.

An especially important lesson learned since 2001 is that catastrophic and incidents of national significance can quickly overwhelm local resources, no matter how extensive those resources seem. This has led to a significant change in planning for emergency response. Historically, response planning had identified that a set amount of resources was needed for a given incident and that additional assets could be obtained as needed. Realistic worst-case scenarios were not thought of, let alone planned for, before September 11. New York City, with the largest public safety force in the world and with operational and training experience second to none, suddenly needed assistance. We as states and cities with limited response capability must prepare for the next event, which will exhaust a region's resources and, quite likely, an entire state's emergency response resources. National Planning Scenarios assist in this process by identifying the 15 most probable worst-case incidents facing the United States. You then can use the capabilities-based planning process to build the right capability in the correct places.

## OHIO'S HOMELAND SECURITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Ohio published its Homeland Security Strategic Plan in 2004. It identifies 36 strategic goals and 205 objectives designed to protect Ohio from terrorism by ensuring effective preparedness for, prevention of, response to, recovery from, and mitigation of terrorist events.

These objectives recognize the need to identify and develop region-

■ **WILLIAM VEDRA JR.** is deputy director of the Ohio Homeland Security Division and a task force leader with FEMA's USAR Ohio Task Force 1. He spent 25 years in the fire service before retiring as a battalion chief from the Columbus (OH) Division of Fire. He held certifications as a paramedic and haz-mat technician. As an officer, he held positions in research and development, training, strategic planning, haz-mat operations command, and in the communication and dispatching center. He is a graduate of Bowling Green State University and currently is a senior fellow at the George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute.

al capabilities to meet the Universal Task List (UTL) and the Target Capability List (TCL) of the National Planning Scenarios. The effort to build and identify those capabilities has resulted in the development of the Ohio Response System (ORS). The ORS, developed under the State Homeland Security Division and modeled after the National US&R response system, has the following mission:

- To develop and expand the State of Ohio's capability to respond to incidents that overwhelm local resources,
- To develop multiple discipline response capabilities as part of an integrated and standardized system,
- To identify and develop a regional response capability that is able to respond to any part of Ohio within two hours, and
- To ensure integrated and interoperable response from local to federal resources.

The OHS Strategic Plan identified eight Homeland Security Regions centered primarily on Ohio's population centers. The ORS' intent is to develop this regional capability in the eight Homeland Security Regions. The goal is to coordinate these resources through the State of Ohio Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during major events. These capabilities for the most part are not new. The initiative is an effort to inventory existing resources, identify gaps, and build a regional plan that increases capability to standard levels in all regions. The disciplines currently under development are the following:

- urban search and rescue,
- haz mat,
- bomb squads,
- mobile communications,
- evidence collection and identification,
- water,
- law enforcement response,
- incident management,
- medical,
- strategic national stockpile (SNS) distribution, regional Technical Advisory Response Unit (TARU) teams
- logistical support, and
- crisis intervention.

A major factor in the ORS' success is the collaboration with existing associations and agencies that will play an important role in building each capability. As an example, the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association will provide leadership and coordination on Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) for the haz mat, US&R, water, and incident management teams. While they provide the leadership, other participants with a role in pro-

viding the specific capability will also be an integral part of the development process. State agencies such as the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio National Guard, and Ohio Department of Health all participate in the appropriate TACs. Other associations such as the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, the Ohio Chiefs' of Police, and the Emergency Managers Association of Ohio have taken leadership roles in other TACs.

**TAC GOALS**

The goals of the TAC are the following:

- To conduct an equipment inventory of the planning region and the state as a whole;
- To conduct needs assessment;
- To prioritize needs;
- To develop response and operational procedures;
- To develop training standards;
- To identify logistical needs and support; and
- To assist each region to meet these equipment, training, and operational needs and standards.

Each TAC will have representatives from the eight planning regions and appropriate state agencies and three associated working groups for operations, training, and logistics. This structure is critical to the success of the ORS. Members of the regional response teams are members of the different work groups. Operational work group decisions need to be placed at the level in which you expect them to be made. To get buy-in and confidence, operational decisions will be made by the personnel

**THE BENEFIT TO LOCAL AND COUNTY OFFICIALS IS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF AND ACCESS TO CURRENT CAPABILITIES.**

expected to complete the tasks, within the strategic goals set by the TAC and the Ohio Homeland Security Division.

**OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

A global or strategic view is provided by an Oversight Committee within Homeland Security, made up of the TAC chairpersons and senior-level representatives of state agencies. The ORS Oversight Committee provides the strategic direction by

- Monitoring program progress in each capability and in each region, and within the State of Ohio as a whole;
- Maintaining and supporting a common committee structure and ensuring completed staff work;
- Integrating standard policy, procedure, and training;
- Identifying common logistical needs and working to fill those needs; and
- Reducing duplication and filling gaps in service.

This structure maintains the overall strategic view and ensures all capabilities are moving in a positive direction. The common structure and staff work will translate into on-scene inter-operability. This will create an environment in which all emergency responders function uniformly and can integrate with federal assets without interruption to incident operations.

The benefit to local and county officials is a better understanding of and access to current capabilities and the ability to fill gaps on a regional basis. National resource typing, standardized training, and logistics will improve their ability to provide aid or request resources from across the state. Planning and exercise on a regional basis will also enhance capability while maximizing effectiveness within limited budgets.

From the state perspective, the ORS meets national and state strategies; Homeland Security Presidential Directives 5 and 8; the GAO Report 04-1009 Effective Regional Coordination; the National Preparedness Goal; and the National Response Plan. From the state EOC, we will know the extent of capability and where it's located, and we will mobilize that resource through our State Emergency Response Plans.

The Ohio Response System gives Ohio's premier response community the structure to better plan, prepare, and respond to catastrophic events and incidents of national significance. This increase in capability and interoperability translates into better day-to-day operations, which means the state of Ohio is safer for its residents and responders. ■

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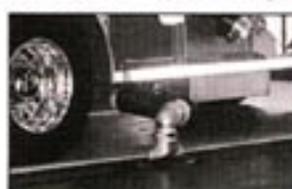
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