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Impersonation of First Responders and Military

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently released a fact sheet “[Impersonation of First Responders](#)” (PDF, 275 Kb). The 2-page brief cautions of the possibility of terrorists using the public trust of fire, EMS, and law enforcement personnel to their advantage by donning uniforms and using emergency equipment and vehicles to help them carry out attacks.

This method has been used successfully overseas, and thwarted plots in France and Belgium this year show the interest in using this scheme is still real. Emergency responders can help ensure they are not successful by utilizing the following security steps:

- Install anti-theft or keyless entry devices on all apparatus;
- Use vehicle tracking systems;
- Install recorded video surveillance systems on all vehicle parking lots;
- Report all stolen or missing uniforms, credentials, and insignia;
- Be able to quickly identify a cloned versus a legitimate vehicle or uniform.

The public accepts the presence of emergency workers without a second look, enabling terrorists or extremists impersonating first responders to access areas they normally wouldn't be allowed in. Even if the uniform is generic – no department patch, fake badge – if they look like the real thing, people take their authenticity for granted.

(Source: [DHS Emergency Services Sector](#))

Codes Must Account for Classroom Barricades

In April, we wrote that the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\) was studying life safety code enforcement and school safety measures in the age of active shooter events](#). The issues concerned locks and other security measures in place to protect building occupants from assailants and how they would affect life safety and fire codes. Current codes do not truly address this issue.

[The final report from the December 2014 meeting was published in May](#) and identified priorities in changes to regulatory codes including: addressing conflicts between security and safety; enabling code exceptions for lockdown events; and developing new door-locking procedures and technologies.

The process to change the codes is underway and will likely be made in the next term. The NFPA states “security is in *addition* to the other building and operational elements that help to keep the educational environment safe,” and stresses the role first responders play in coordination and cooperation. They also stress security itself should not be seen as a substitute for overall life safety measures.

(Source: [NFPA](#))

Justice: New Office Focuses on Domestic Terrorism

More Americans have died from attacks carried out by domestic extremists in the past few years than by international terrorist groups. Despite foreign terrorism taking the lead after the September 11th attacks, focus is shifting back to domestic terrorism and extremism, and the Justice Department created a new office to focus on the issue.

[“The Domestic Terrorism Council will assist federal prosecutors nationwide who are working on domestic terrorism cases,”](#) stated a Department of Justice official. The office will look for legal gaps that need closing in order to address these threats while coordinating prosecution of domestic terrorists, as it differs from the way foreign terrorists are prosecuted.

Most homegrown violent extremists and domestic terrorists fall into the categories of radical anti-government, racist, anarchist, and other extreme beliefs. Recent cases in this category include the racially-motivated church shooting in South Carolina and the targeted murders of two Las Vegas police officers last year by anti-government extremists.

[The new office will work with the Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee.](#) Originally created after the Oklahoma City bombing, it was disbanded after the September 11th attacks and revived in April 2015, the 20 year anniversary of Oklahoma City. Both offices will work to discuss insights from cases and trends.

(Source: [DOJ](#))

USFA Professional Development Series

A recent Coffee Break Training series, “Professional Development in the Modern Fire Service,” from the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) focuses on the importance of continuing education and training in the fire service.

The series reminds us that all responders are ultimately responsible for their own safety and personal and professional development help toward that goal. Education and training, whether new ground or a refresher of common practices, not only makes the work second-nature to you but also helps establish you as an expert. If all members of the department operate with this in mind it creates a stable core of knowledge and experience which ultimately improves the whole.

[Part one](#) (PDF, 96 Kb) of this series focuses on professional development in general. [Part two](#) (PDF, 95 Kb) talks about formal education and the ways it is beneficial, and [part three](#) (PDF, 94 Kb) talks about training and questioning habits.

(Source: [USFA](#))

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