

DHS Science and Technology Directorate

First Responder Communities of Practice

Advancing collaboration and information-sharing

According to the American Ambulance Association, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and U.S. Fire Administration, the responsibility for emergency services in the United States is spread out among more than 89,000 separate and independent agencies. This fragmentation, coupled with resource constraints and the lack of a common technology platform, inhibits public safety and emergency practitioners from collaborating on critical preparedness projects, sharing best practices and exchanging lessons learned across disciplines and jurisdictions.

The First Responder Communities of Practice (FRCoP) is a professional networking, collaboration and communication platform for active and retired first responders, emergency response professionals, government employees and others working in homeland security and preparedness. Created by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate (S&T), this vetted community focuses on emergency preparedness, response, recovery and other homeland security topics and issues.

Trusted environment to stay connected

It can be costly and difficult to develop integrated collaboration platforms for information and resource sharing across agencies, especially when the nature of the work requires additional security protections. The FRCoP is a collaboration platform developed specifically for this purpose.

Registered members can join or create communities around a particular topic, mission, project or area of interest. Members can post relevant documents, use wikis, post questions to discussion boards, share links using the bookmark tool, review suggested content and write and respond to blog entries. The dynamic search feature allows members to find relevant tagged documents and other registered members on the platform. Members can subscribe to receive daily digest e-mail updates on site activities. Personal inboxes and real-time chat capabilities allow members to send direct messages to one another.

Reaching a wide range of backgrounds, disciplines, and localities

There is no longer a need to search the Internet to connect with peers. The conversations are ongoing and the site is home to dozens of groups hosting a variety of discussions

to improve disaster readiness, response and recovery. New communities are forming daily to address topics of interest to professionals engaged in public safety and homeland security.

The FRCoP offers two types of communities

Open Community: Users can discuss and collaborate on a general topic area like Emergency Management, Law Enforcement or Search and Rescue

Restricted Community: Users can set up restricted communities for specific projects or initiatives. Membership for these communities is controlled by S&T, which can add or remove members as necessary.

The Communities of Practice site is approved for the exchange of For Official Use Only (FOUO) and Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU) information.

Who can join to contribute and learn?

First responders; government employees and government-



sponsored academic professionals, contractors and citizens engaged in homeland security can join the FRCoP.

Note: To ensure a trusted environment, all members' identities are verified during the registration process.



**Homeland
Security**

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To learn more about the First Responder Communities of Practice, please contact SandTFRG@dhs.gov.