

DHS Science and Technology Directorate

Support to the Homeland Security Enterprise and *First Responders Group*

What we do

Across the nation, over 70,000 state, local, tribal and federal agencies and related entities support public safety and emergency response. These agencies and entities are faced with distinct resource, governance, policy and technological environments and limitations. As such, cross-discipline and cross-jurisdictional collaboration and coordination is a continuous challenge. The Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate established the First Responders Group (FRG) as the Department's primary interface with the first responder community. FRG supports the community's ability to protect the homeland and respond to disasters by ensuring they have the equipment, technology and information they need. FRG is separated into three divisions covering communications, equipment and testing.



Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC)

Interoperability and compatibility are critical challenges faced by first responders today. When responders and decision makers cannot communicate across disciplines and jurisdictions, the information delays may lead to loss of life or property. [OIC](#) provides the technology to enable emergency communications and facilitate the seamless exchange of information to ensure that decision makers and first responders are able to achieve their missions safely and effectively. OIC has three portfolios to address these issues: voice and data, information sharing and alerts, warnings and notifications.

First Responder Technologies (R-Tech)

[R-Tech](#) works on technologies that are first responder community priorities that are not currently being addressed by industry. R-Tech focuses on reducing first responder vulnerability by quickly developing solutions and providing technical assistance. R-Tech is divided into four portfolios: personal protective equipment and tools, 3-D location and response awareness, Technology Clearinghouse and Responder Technology Alliance.

National Urban Security Technology Laboratory (NUSTL)

[NUSTL](#) acts as a bridge between technology developers and first responders as it tests, evaluates and analyzes homeland security capabilities. NUSTL tests homeland security technologies to ensure that first responders are equipped with the appropriate tools to meet their mission-critical objectives. State and local decision makers and first responders consult NUSTL as a technical authority to implement new technologies in the field. NUSTL also works to enhance first responder capabilities to respond to and recover from radiological and nuclear threats. NUSTL contains three primary portfolios: test, evaluations and assessments, technical advisors to first responders and radiological/nuclear response and recovery.

Cross-Cutting Programs

In addition to the three divisions, FRG runs two group-wide programs – [System Assessment and Validation for Emergency Responders \(SAVER\)](#) and Communications, Outreach and Responder Engagement (CORE). These programs work across OIC, R-Tech and NUSTL, encouraging collaboration both within FRG and with the first responder community. SAVER aspires to be the preeminent source of information for assessment and procurement data on first responder technologies. CORE engages with first responders on technology, standards and research, in person, at conferences and roundtables and online via [FirstResponder.gov](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Apex Next Generation First Responder (NGFR)

[NGFR](#) is a high-priority FRG program that aims to ensure that first responders are “protected, connected and fully aware,” allowing for a timely, efficient and safe response to disasters of all sizes. To do so, NGFR is developing an integrated system of protective equipment, wearable smart devices and robust communication networks. By integrating smart technology into their duty uniforms, first responders will have access to the information they need, know what other responders are doing and be protected against common hazards. NGFR will benefit both first responders and the public by improving the efficiency and accuracy of the response.



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To learn more about FRG and its initiatives, visit scitech.dhs.gov/first-responders or contact first.responder@hq.dhs.gov.