

The First Responder Resource Group (FRRG) – An Emergency Response and Preparedness Think Tank

FRRG at the core of research and development planning

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) relies on experienced emergency response and preparedness professionals to guide its research and development efforts. The First Responder Resource Group (FRRG) fills that role.

Comprised of 120 active and retired first responders, the FRRG is an all-volunteer working group that helps S&T maintain focus on the top-priority needs of responders in the field. The members are drawn from a broad range of disciplines (law enforcement, fire service, emergency medical service, emergency management, etc.) and sectors (local, state, tribal, and federal government, as well as professional associations and the private sector) and all regions of the country.

Identifying capability gaps and operational requirements

The FRRG's primary role is two-fold: 1) to identify high-priority capability gaps in the first responder community, which S&T development efforts might be able to fill, and 2) to define the minimum operational requirements that technologies and knowledge products must meet in order to fill those gaps effectively. FRRG members also often help validate and evaluate solutions during development.

Among the S&T projects and technologies for which the FRRG has provided expert guidance are:

- Ambulance Safety & Design Standards
- EDGE Virtual Training
- Field Biometric Identification
- Personal Chemical Detector
- Public Alerts & Warning using Social Media.

The FRRG process

The FRRG's starting point is the most recent report issued by Project Responder, a multi-year effort by DHS and local, state, tribal, and federal response agencies to identify and prioritize gaps between current first responder

capabilities and those required for effective response to catastrophic incidents. In the case of Project Responder 3, the FRRG membership reviewed the report and developed Operational Requirement Documents for 15 top-priority capability gaps. Subsequently, the group has participated throughout the development cycle of S&T-funded projects related to those capability gaps, to insure that the resulting technologies meet end user needs.

Key part of the solution development process

The FRRG is part of S&T's solution development process, which subjects all projects to rigorous and transparent validation to ensure not only that the projects meet legitimate first responder needs but also that their deliverables are highly likely to be transitioned into use.



An FRRG breakout group discusses operational requirements for personal protective equipment. (PHOTO: ROBERT AUSURA)

An invaluable asset

Since its establishment in 2011, the FRRG has proven itself an invaluable asset to S&T, yet its real value is in the service it provides to taxpayers, first responders, and the emergency preparedness community nationwide. Through their voluntary contributions to homeland security, the men and women of the FRRG ensure that tax dollars for research and development are directed where they will do the most good and that the technology solutions that S&T develops truly meet the needs of responders on the front lines.

