



**Homeland  
Security**

Science and Technology

# Highlight

## U.S. Department of Homeland Security



System Assessment and Validation for Emergency Responders

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established the System Assessment and Validation for Emergency Responders (SAVER) Program to assist emergency responders making procurement decisions.

Located within the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) of DHS, the SAVER Program conducts unbiased operational tests on commercial equipment and systems and provides those results along with other relevant equipment information to the emergency response community in an operationally useful form. SAVER provides information on equipment that falls within the categories listed in the DHS Authorized Equipment List (AEL). The SAVER Program mission includes:

- Conducting impartial, practitioner relevant, and operationally oriented assessments and validations of emergency responder equipment;
- Providing information that enables decision makers and responders to better select, procure, use, and maintain emergency responder equipment.

Information provided by the SAVER Program will be shared nationally with the responder community, providing a life-saving and cost-saving asset to DHS, as well as to federal, state, and local responders.

The SAVER Program is supported by a network of technical agents who perform assessment and validation activities. Further, SAVER focuses primarily on two main questions for the emergency responder community: "What equipment is available?" and "How does it perform?"

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## Hand-Held Thermal Imaging Devices

The ability to detect an individual in total darkness is a common desire among law enforcement officers. Currently, many law enforcement officers must use a flashlight to illuminate the area of surveillance. A superior solution is a small hand-held thermal imaging device (also known as a thermal imager) that can provide a covert method of surveillance, giving law enforcement a tactical advantage at night. Many types of thermal imagers are available, ranging from large, long-range, fixed-camera systems to small, compact, hand-held devices ideal for law enforcement patrol officers.

An assessment of thermal imagers in law enforcement applications was conducted by the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SPAWARSYSCEN), Charleston. This comparative assessment project used the input and assistance of various emergency responders and law enforcement organizations to examine the different features of hand-held products required for specific applications. The result of this assessment, intended for the emergency responder community, is equally applicable to other agencies and is built on extensive law enforcement experience with current hand-held technologies, capabilities, and limitations. The *Hand-Held Thermal Imaging Devices for Law Enforcement Comparative Assessment Report* presents the assessment results for devices that can meet emergency responder's needs.

Other documents on hand-held thermal imaging devices include the *Thermal Imaging TechNote*, that details the background, performance factors, applications and features of thermal imaging technology, and the *Hand-Held Thermal Imagers for Law Enforcement Needs and Requirements Report* that documents the needs and requirements for a hand-held thermal imager as identified by a focus group.

All reports in the series as well as reports on other technologies are posted on the SAVER Web site (<https://www.rkb.us/saver>) as they become available.