



FEMA

CDP Celebrates 500,000 Trained D.C. Fire Fighter Sets CDP Training Milestone

When the Center for Domestic Preparedness, located in Anniston, Ala., was founded in 1998, it was envisioned as a resident training facility that would train a maximum of 10,000 responders per year. In FY 2009, the CDP staff trained more than 98,000 responders from across the United States and its territories, well exceeding the initial expectations of the late '90s.

In an Oct. 9th ceremony, the CDP added another milestone to its young, 11-year history. Fire Fighter Ralph Thompson became the 500,000th emergency responder to graduate from a CDP training course. A sergeant with the District of Columbia Fire Department, Thompson has served the response community for over 23 years, and is a graduate of 15 CDP courses.

As a young man, Thompson started his response career at the age of 16 while serving as a volunteer fire fighter. However, his love for fire fighting was put on hold in 1988 when he was unable to take the entrance exam to fire fighting school, and was placed on a waiting list. Determined to serve, he accepted a testing slot in 1990 for the D.C. Police Department and soon began serving the citizens of the nation's capital as a police officer. It wasn't until 1997 that he was allowed to take the fire fighting entrance exam. He passed—beginning his professional career as a full-time fire fighter.

"I believe in training and building valuable skills," said Thompson. "Each CDP course has provided information that you can relate to real-life events. Without training like this, we become stagnant in what we do. A person never wants to feel unprepared, and as long as you're constantly training and preparing yourself, you can handle anything if it happens."

Deputy Administrator of FEMA's Preparedness Directorate Tim Manning addressed the large crowd of CDP employees and responder students in attendance.

"It's a wonderful occasion," he said. "The employees at the CDP have done an amazing job preparing America's responders for the worst of disasters. To be able to graduate 500,000 students means responders around the country have the tools they need when response is required. I'm proud to represent the DHS Secretary and FEMA Administrator here today."

Dr. Todd Jones, CDP superintendent, said reaching such a milestone only shows the level of better preparedness America's communities have achieved.

"This means that there are 500,000 better prepared first responders to help the citizens of this country when the time calls," added Jones. "To be a part of this is an honor and a privilege and the CDP has made a significant preparedness contribution to the nation."



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Entering its 12th year as the nation’s only federally-chartered Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) training facility for civilian responders, the CDP will continue to focus on training to ensure communities across the nation are prepared. The CDP is a component of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and features a unique hands-on training experience for state, local, and tribal emergency responders.

“This was an honor. Being the 500,000th graduate was unexpected,” added Thompson. “To be selected from among impressive response personnel is humbling. All the responders, whom I’ve met during CDP training are very knowledgeable, and have the same desire to become more prepared. This was truly an honor.”

Learn more about the CDP at <http://cdp.dhs.gov>.

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FEMA’s mission is to support its citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.