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CDP Offers Critical Mass Protest Training Unlawful Protester Devices Delaying Events Defeated

By Shannon Arledge, CDP Public Affairs

A city is only as strong as its response force. But how does a region remain on the cusp of preparedness, especially in the wake of large events that attract thousands of spectators?

The Center for Domestic Preparedness, located in Anniston, Ala., stands on the forefront of up-to-date, cutting-edge training for America's emergency responders. While most of the training takes place at the Alabama facility, the CDP also offers an aggressive Mobile Training Team (MTT) approach to training. During December 2008 and January 2009, the CDP conducted 18 MTTs that provided training to hundreds of emergency responders who supported the Presidential Inauguration, and will also support Super Bowl XLIII.

A number of CDP training staff traveled to Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Florida to provide training in crowd control and unlawful protests. The instructors also presented state and local authorities with applications of incident command, which describes organizational processes during emergency operations. The majority of responders attending the three-day courses were from the fire service and law enforcement disciplines, and a number of healthcare professionals and hazardous material technicians.

"High-profile events such as the Inauguration and Super Bowl require complex management and planning," commented Mike Aguilar, CDP training specialist. "In addition to the intricate management and planning issues, it's possible that people will execute their First Amendment rights to speech and assembly. The [incident command and crowd control] training prepares officials and responders to deal with these events in a professional way that protects our rights, while simultaneously protecting the integrity of the event and ensuring the safety of everyone involved."

"This course has made us aware of what protesters are capable of and the different devices protesters use," offered Sgt. Charles Torbeck, of the Maryland Transportation Authority Police. "It's excellent, outstanding training and we now have the knowledge to defeat these devices designed to prevent or disrupt events. I think all law enforcement should be part of this training."

"This is one of the top courses for law enforcement," commented Lt. Lori Borrelli, St. Petersburg, Fla., police department. "As the devices used by protesters become more sophisticated, we need to be prepared."

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CDP Offers Critical Mass Protest Training (Cont.)

As presidential election proceedings dominated the headlines prior to the November 2008 election, the CDP staff worked closely with state and local officials responsible for hosting the Republican and Democratic National Conventions in Colorado and Minnesota. Several thousand officials—mostly law enforcement—benefited from the cutting-edge training geared towards managing civil actions and incident command.

“Agencies requesting CDP training in preparation for special events recognize the value of our training programs,” added Aguilar. “The CDP instructors and trainers are veterans with real-world experience. An added value to the training is that many of the participants are also veterans in their field, who willingly share their relevant experience.”

“I think we all learned a lot during this training,” added Lt. Neal Jester, Maryland Transportation Authority Police. “This training opens your eyes to the lengths people go to, to delay events or to just get attention. We went into this not knowing a great deal about protester devices. Now, if we come across a situation where illegal methods of protest or protester devices are being used, we have the training to defeat the device and clear a scene.”

The CDP offers 38 unique courses that provide training for emergency responders, from law enforcement protection and incident response programs to pandemic influenza and healthcare emergency management. More than 114,000 of America’s emergency responders participated in CDP training programs during 2008 and the CDP staff is prepared for another successful training year during 2009.

“The [Managing Civil Actions] training is essential for responders who encounter an illegal mass protest or riot situation,” remarked Deputy Benjamin Kenney, Hillsborough County Florida Sheriffs Office. “Each class builds upon a variety of skill sets and has the opportunity to train with other departments, which puts us all in sync in the event we ever have to work together.”

Courses range from one to four days in length and provide interdisciplinary resident and non-resident training courses that promote greater understanding among 10 diverse responder disciplines: Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Service, Governmental Administrative, Hazardous Materials, Healthcare, Law Enforcement, Public Health, Public Safety Communications, and Public Works.

The CDP is a vital component of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Preparedness Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security. The Anniston training center is the only federally-chartered Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) training facility in the nation.

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Numerous federal and non-federal training partnerships enable the CDP staff to share their knowledge and experience, ensuring the nation's emergency response providers receive the most up-to-date training. The CDP offers responders a wide range of training available as resident or non-resident programs, and Mobile Training Teams.

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