

Fire Departments Lack Preparation for Active Shooter Responses

Research Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Executive Fire Officer Program

By
Dustin A. Dommel

National Fire Academy

February 2023

Abstract

Headlines scream “a dozen dead from active shooter” across the newspaper. This has become a common occurrence in the United States with the notoriety starting about two decades ago. These acts of domestic terrorism have gripped our Country and caused increasing fear in public places where we cannot seem to let our guard down. The locations, types of places, methods of destruction, and demographics of the targets have been diversified. The one item that does not change is the panic and heartache caused to many when their loved ones are injured or killed. Some of these assailants are sure to make their reasoning known why they have committed such a horrific act while others are never known. Unfortunately, the number of similar events will not diminish. The other consistent piece is the necessary commitment of first responders to work together to save those placed in harm's way.

This study examined the problem fire departments are facing during these responses through review of literature and qualitative analysis of interviews performed with fire service leaders of central Pennsylvania. Results are showing some fire departments are unprepared, have a lack of training, and are not working closely with the other first responders. Recommendations from the research include fire departments working closer with other first responders, formulating standard operating guidelines (SOGs), and participating in pre-planned training events.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family who have been supportive and understanding during this process over the last few years. Additionally, I would like to thank the Lancaster City Bureau of Fire who have allowed me to participate in the Executive Fire Officer Program and have offered any assistance needed during the process. Also, I would like to send my appreciation to the participants who have helped me gather research to get the most accurate data as possible to highlight a concern we are facing in the fire service.

My affiliation with the Lancaster City Bureau of Fire is provided as biographical information. No official sponsorship or endorsement of this dissertation by the Lancaster City Bureau of Fire was provided or should be inferred.

The views expressed in this dissertation are the views of the author and participants alone and do not represent the official views of the U.S. Government or any fire department. Certain commercial entities, equipment, or materials may be identified in order to describe a concept or experimental procedure adequately. Use of company names or devices does not imply recommendation or endorsement by the Lancaster City Bureau of Fire, nor is it intended to imply the entities, materials, or equipment are the best available for the purpose.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	7
Background & Significance of Research	8
Problem Statement	9
Purpose Statement	10
Research Questions	11
Summarizing the Introduction	12
Chapter 2 - Literature Review	12
Topic: Increase in Violence in Schools	12
Subtopic 1: Bullying increases the chances for school violence, including shootings	15
Subtopic 2: Acts of violence become emergency resources intensive	18
Subtopic 3: Fire Department's provide substantial benefits at active shooter events	20
Chapter 3 - Research Design	21

FIRE DEPARTMENTS LACK OF PREPARATION	5
Population and Sample Size	22
Instruments	24
Research Process	25
Ethical Considerations	27
Summary of the Research Design	29
Chapter 4 – Introduction – Demographics of the Participants	30
Research Results	30
Summary	35
Chapter 5 – Summary of the Results	36
Conclusions Based Upon the Research	37
Limitations	38
Implications and Recommendations to the Field	40
Recommendations for Future Research	41
Conclusion	41
References	43
Appendix A. Informed Consent Form.....	46

Appendix B. Participant Questionnaire.....	47
--	----

Introduction

The fire service has been evolving over the several hundred years of its existence in the United States. What started as community fire protection with dedicated volunteers and buckets has morphed into an all-hazards mitigation service. While the services being performed by the fire service are very much needed, where is the limit of expectations to ensure quality and dependable service when called upon? It is best to commit oneself to fully understanding one or two specialties at a maximum. This includes training and participating in similar events on a regular basis. Obviously, some of the higher priority incidents may only be responded to once or twice in a career. Continuous training on the topic can help a rescuer stay proficient.

Fire Departments like to be involved in numerous services. Varied factors including size of department, budget, and administrative restraints will help or hinder the vision and ability to provide a certain service. While most fire department responses are medical related, there are responses involving suppression and special operations. A newer responsibility being placed on fire departments is responding to active shooter/mass casualty events.

The popularity of these horrific active shooter events has gained traction, and this has caused a great deal of change among responses for first responders. Over the last 30 years, the number of events and the style of which violent acts occur builds on itself. “Between 1982 and 2011, a mass active shooter incident occurred roughly once every 20 days,” (Apex, 2020). While the methods may have been different, the intent of harming citizens was the objective.

Background & Significance of Research

The goal of first responders reporting to an event like this is no different than any other incident they respond to: save lives. The circumstances of the event, volume of victims, and resources readily available make it difficult for a single discipline, law enforcement, to handle a situation adequately and safely. Utilizing fire and ems resources to quickly access the victims and provide immediate care encourages the survival rate to rise and allows law enforcement to focus more directly on their priorities.

There have been a few “major” active shooter events that really stood out for varied reasons. The first is the Columbine High School in 1999 where two shooters killed over a dozen people. This event seemed to be the first that started the domino effect of events with major media coverage. Another event with a major loss of life was the Las Vegas Music Festival. “Fifty-eight people were killed and 850 were injured (422 from gunshot wounds) when Stephen Paddock started shooting from a thirty-second-floor window of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino into a crowd of 22,000 attending the Route 91 Harvest Country Music Festival,” (Rielage, 2018, p. 1). Active shooter events are still a new topic and there is not a substantial amount of research completed. However, there do not appear to be any deficiencies in the current literature available.

Loss of life events from active shooters have occurred across the United States, not just in high population areas. Additionally, they have occurred in districts ranging from fully career fire/ems departments to volunteer organizations. This should be the “wake up” that all administrators in first responder organizations need to prioritize their response model for a similar style event. It is understood that there is a small chance that this could occur in your

district, but it could happen. It is no longer acceptable to say, “I didn’t think it would happen here” and brush off the acceptance that your organization was not prepared. Events like these will be chaotic until some form of command and control occurs but that is why we train and plan. We need open lines of communication among the other local disciplines to establish response protocols and an understanding of responsibility. Unfortunately, many departments have not addressed these priorities and are taking their chances. It is not acceptable to lose another savable civilian because the fire/ems resources were not prepared and did not understand their roles and responsibilities. The aim of this research is to bring to light areas of improvement to continue and provide the best possible care to those in all communities. It is the hope of this researcher to ensure improvement in his own organization therefore positively affecting our community.

Problem Statement

The problem is there have been a growing number of active shooter events throughout the United States, increasing the statistics of domestic terrorism. The type of terror the assailants are causing is ranging from some individuals being injured to over a dozen killed and/or injured. The areas where these situations happen are different because they range from businesses, schools, and places of worship. Also, the type of population is a wide range because they have occurred in small communities, medium sized towns, and large metropolitan cities. All these events seek immediate attention and reaction from first responders, especially members of the fire department.

The fire department has become an integral part of this response. The fire department, law enforcement, ems, as well as other first response agencies will need to address threats, triage,

treat the injured, and rescue those who are still in harm's way. There is an enormous amount of responsibility for the responding agencies. All this coordinated effort takes planning from all the potential agencies that could respond to an event like this. While the expectation of performance is high, the potential for an event like this in your district is rather low. With the chances of occurring being low, many executives and administrators have not focused time and attention on pre-planning a multiagency response where everyone's responsibility is critical working towards a successful outcome. The success would come from those victims whose lives are saved due to the quick reaction of the responders. As you will see in multiple examples throughout this thesis, these administrators never thought it would happen in their area, despite the diversity of these incidents. Fire departments have not adequately prepared themselves for these responses.

Purpose Statement

The purpose is to minimize the number of casualties as a direct result of an active shooter event. There are times we are conditioning our bodies to stay in shape for some of the arduous tasks that we could be called to perform or the fire prevention activities we host to educate our communities to help lower the number of fire related injuries or fatalities. These are examples of tasks we perform that hold a purpose with a goal associated with it. When discussing the response to an active shooter event, the fire departments hold a purpose. This purpose is to provide excellent and proficient services throughout the event. This includes providing medical attention to the victims of an event or providing service to the other responding agencies. Examples of this include assisting with forcible entry to the police officers or providing manpower to the other ems agencies. There are reasons that an event like this calls on multiple agencies to perform their expertise.

The fire service knows they are tasked with a variety of subject matters that they are expected to be experts on. This requires everyone from the command staff, the company officers, and the firefighters to research, train, and become proficient in what they could be called to do. If an event happens one time, it could happen again. There is no room for the mindset of a fire service member to “brush it off” and pay little attention to it. An effort needs to be made to know what the responsibilities may be and how to perform them. Preparation for a high risk, low frequency event is still important despite the small chance of it occurring. Active shooter events have been in the spotlight for decades and we can no longer say “I didn’t think it would happen here.” It is our responsibility to understand these events are now part of our responses and when well prepared, we can work as a unified front to make a difference and save lives.

Research Questions

1. What type of SOG/SOP’s do most fire departments in the United States have for a response to an active shooter/active assailant event?
 - a) What type of adjustments have occurred to their SOG/SOP after an event?
2. What type of unified training/preparation among the first responders have occurred throughout the country?
 - a) What are the requirements/expectations for unified training?
 - b) What type of required training among first responders in preparation of an event is mandated by the state or local government?

3. What type of information are first responders learning after reviewing after action reports and highlighting areas of improvement to minimize the potential for repeat issues during future events?

a) How are the after-action reports looking at the event from all sides?

Summarizing the Introduction

The research method will be a qualitative study. This research will gather information about fire departments and their preparedness for active shooter events. With the number of events and participation from fire departments over the last two plus decades, there should be enough information and statistics to see what type of trend is occurring. Most importantly, we are improving our ability to work together and provide exceptional service to citizens during times of great need.

Literature Review

Topic: Increase in Violence in Schools

Schools have become a target for acts of violence. What has occurred to cause such events? Is this a new trend or has this always occurred and it is receiving more publicity now, as opposed to years ago? There are several varied reasons for this increase and notoriety. Some of the areas are discussed in the literature reviews below.

The article “Addressing Violence in Education” (Hughes, 2019) is an overview of how violence and education can be intertwined and some of the reasoning behind it. Something as simple as the structural format of the education system can appear to be forceful to some that may result in increased agitation and encourage violent acts.

When looking at reasons for acts of violence, some instances are triggered by forms of competition. There are numerous examples of competition that one could look at when investigating education. Hughes (2019) uses an example that could be considered the backbone of the education system: the grading system. The grades represent the ability of a student to exhibit effort and satisfy the objectives. Examples of this include quizzes, tests, projects, or participation in discussion. Hughes (2019) discusses the ability for the grading system to be “symbolically violent.” The example used in his writing is the divide between those who have received a formal education and those who have not. There can be a stigma in the United States to “look down” on those who are not formally educated.

The grades that a student receives represent their ability to complete the tasks assigned, whether that was through a test of knowledge or a project to show proficiency. In most cases, the higher the grade, the more confidence the student has. For those who have lower grades, it could represent a lack of confidence, a disconnect through the learning process, or the inability to put the effort into completing the assignment. There can be assorted reasons why the student fails to meet their requirements including learning disabilities, lack of cognitive reasoning, or other stress factors outside of the learning environment. Many that receive lower grades have a feeling of failure or embarrassment which can lead to other negative events, in some cases compensating for the original reasons of failure.

Teachers hold significant power over students, not only in the form of formal grading, but emotionally when they show physical signs or verbalize disappointment. Hughes (2019) discusses an interesting point about the relationship between a teacher and student. In most cases, the student looks up to the teacher. This can cause the student to feel completely failed if a teacher seems disgusted or disappointed or the student receives low markings because a teacher

can use judgement in grading for certain courses. The lack of self-esteem, feeling of being a failure, being labeled as less than desirable through grading, or outside contributing factors can all build on the student and a result could be aggression through forms of violence.

In summarizing Hughes (2019), stress brings intense pressure, and everyone handles it differently. This is no different for adolescents. While some children use stress as a reason to “shut down,” others turn it into a negative response, such as bullying. Bullying can come in all forms including physical, psychological, and cyberbullying, which is a newer trend. In a school setting, the reason a student is bullied could vary greatly. However, all forms have negative impacts, and some have long lasting consequences. The big picture is that there is power in education and there is a much better chance for negative outcomes when an individual is suffering from a lack of an education or additional outliers that drive the potential for acts of violence up.

Boran and Taskan (2021) look at four distinct factors for violence in school settings. They include individual, family-related, social, and school-related. There are a variety of individual factors that could contribute to acts of violence in schools. However, a few that were discussed in the article include anti-social behavior, learning disability, attention deficit disorder (ADD), and low intelligence. All these items share the same ideas that Hughes (2019) discussed about having low self-esteem or the feeling of being a failure. Some of these items can be warning signs of potential violent acts in the future.

Family related issues can have detrimental effects on a child, especially in school. When a child is of school age, they face many pressures and stressors. Some of these include the ability to “fit in” among other students and the ability to be successful in the classroom. Having outliers causing additional stress can have a negative impact on a developing young person. Outside

stressors include negative family situations, recent loss of a loved one, or an unfamiliar environment because of a recent move. Some students do not know how to deal with the overwhelming stressors and the result will be shown through acts of violence.

In summary, there are many factors that need to be considered when looking at the behavior of an individual, especially violent behaviors. In many cases, there is an outside factor that is causing the person to react in a certain manner which can be portrayed as negative. If we are looking to dig into the root cause of a problem, it is most likely not easily exposed and the subject needs to be looked at globally. When it is determined what some of the underlying factors are, those areas can be focused on to help mitigate the potential for violence in schools.

Subtopic 1 – Bullying increases the chance for school violence, including shootings

The article “Can Mass Shootings be Stopped” (Schildkraut, Formica & Malatras, 2018) looks at the publicity that occurred from the Columbine High School shooting in 1999. The American Psychological Association (2022) defines bullying as an intentional behavior that causes a lack of comfort or injuries. Bullying seems to be discussed on many occasions with the media when dealing with active shooter events. The media has played into the ability to control how we feel about these events. Certain active shooter events have copious quantities of coverage and potentially making the event out to be much larger than it was. On the other hand, some events are played off by the media and are not so aggressively put “in your face” almost making it seem that it was not an important event.

While the topic of active shooter events has received a wide range of publicity, these events did not begin with Columbine High School in 1999. Schildkraut (2018) provides some “myths and realities” behind what that media or others would like you to believe versus what the

actual truth is. While the potential for you to be a victim of a mass shooting/active shooter event is extremely low, it is still increasing every year. Additionally, schools rank as the 2nd highest location for an act of violence event to happen, behind businesses. The shootings can be looked at as a bigger problem, not identified strictly to that school, but more from the result of bullying/peer pressure.

In summary, there are many contributing parts that play into these violent events. Depending on what information is released and how you want to process it, it could alter your global picture of these events. While there is no “magic button” to push and eliminate or drastically lower the potential for active shooter events to occur, it is our responsibility to continue to educate ourselves and look for additional patterns of offenders. Once these patterns are established, a plan of action can be started in hopes of prevention.

The article “School Firearm Violence Prevention Practices and Policies” (Price & Khubchandani, 2019) discusses the role that firearm violence involves our youth and the number of events that occur each year. Up until this article, there has not been a great deal of research on how to lessen the amount or completely prevent these types of events from occurring in schools.

The article begins with statistics related to firearm violence among youth and who is most at risk of being a victim of a shooting event. Even with the large attention that media will play into active shooter events at a school, they are typically rare events. There are statistics in the article that show the increasing rate of firearms being carried to schools or the optics of a firearm being readily available to a student.

In a national study of parents, they have viewed peer harassment or bullying as one of the highest reasons for firearm violence in schools. Events of bullying in schools have been around

for decades. However, this has become a topic of great discussion because of the escalated incidents that have occurred as a direct result of the suspect being bullied or having negative experiences during their schooling. Earlier in this paper, we discussed some of the factors that are associated with the suspects who commit acts of school violence. Two of those items were anti-social behavior and low intelligence.

This article identifies that a young person who could be involved in a firearm-related event will show behavior changes. Also, they could be verbalizing different things that are associated with causing problems such as aggression, home life, depression, among a series of others. There is discussion about other students who have heard rumors that a fellow student has made threats and they fail to advise a school official or another adult. Some of the schools have taken measures to have the appearance of being safer for all parties. This could include hiring School Resource Officers (SRO's) or having metal detectors present. Unfortunately, this does not always deter the aggressor from attempting an act.

In summary, the school systems throughout the United States are given a challenging task with protecting all the students and teachers. However, there are factors playing against the ability to provide a safe environment. The amount of firearm violence among juveniles continues to increase. There are multiple reasons for the increase of violence, specifically firearms, but a common theme continues to be bullying/peer harassment. Unfortunately, the article identified that there have not been any findings that have reduced or prevented violence involving firearms from occurring.

Subtopic 2 – Acts of violence, including active shooter events at schools become emergency resources intensive

The article “Mass Casualty Shootings and Emergency Preparedness” (Melmer et al., 2019) discusses some of the more notable active shooter events that have occurred in the United States in the last few decades. There have been many events that resulted in extensive casualties that needed treatment and transportation to a medical facility. The article investigates the amount of effort that goes into the response and treatment during a mass shooting, being that it is the most common type of mass casualty event occurring in the United States. While much of the focus for articles about active shooter events investigates the tactical and primary focus of the first emergency responders on the scene, this has an interesting take on what you do with managing such a critical number of casualties. The initial efforts of the first responders will help pave the next few hours during treatment of the victims.

The efforts of the first responders do not always end after the initial treatment on the scene. Depending on the location of the event will determine the availability of a hospital to effectively manage a large incident. In many cases, some of the victims will be transported to other hospital facilities, but coordination will determine how quickly that will occur. All medical treatment systems will become overwhelmed at some point and there will be a need for a contingency plan.

In summary, response protocols need to be established for all levels of participants from the first responders to the healthcare system. Triage is a key component of managing a large-scale incident and helping to prevent patient overload at the medical center. With first responders separating the critical patients who need immediate lifesaving treatment from those that can

maintain a stable status by tourniquets and other forms of medical treatment, it will help prevent overload.

The article “Hybrid Targeted Violence” (Frazzano & Snyder, 2014) discusses the growing number of active shooter events that are occurring globally. While the number of events is manageable, it still impacts many lives including families, first responders and the community.

A heavy concentration was placed on the events that occur on school grounds. We must abandon the mindset that the fire and ems resources stage until long after the suspect has been neutralized. The Rescue Task Force (RTF) concept has been adopted by some agencies and the idea is being pushed throughout the United States. First responders must perform as safely as possible but utilize all attempts to provide immediate care to those injured.

It is important for emergency responders to learn from events and accept constructive criticism. There will be aspects that went well, especially for those agencies that have pre-planned or trained in this type of response. Even with preparation, there will be areas for improvement and, especially for agencies not associated with the event in question, to formulate responses or procedures if they would be faced with the same situation. Sharing this information with everyone provides a great learning tool, but unfortunately, it highlights shortcomings for someone that wishes to perform an active shooter event.

In summary, it is up to those first responders that are working to perform at peak level and to “think outside the box,” if needed. Active Shooter/Mass Casualty events are becoming more complex. The priority must remain with addressing the suspect, followed by triaging, and treating those injured.

Subtopic 3 – Fire Departments provide substantial benefits at active shooter events

The article “Active Shooter Response” (Pulvermacher, 2016) identifies a police department and fire department from Wisconsin that have worked together in preparation for an active shooter event. Their community had taken a positive approach and trained the school district for the event of an active shooter.

There was a detailed discussion on the amount of training and how in-depth the preparation was to train for an active shooter event. The school district became involved and took a much more proactive approach including learning about the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) program and RUN, HIDE, FIGHT criteria. School officials were instructed on tourniquet use and hemorrhage control practices. This is critical in “buying time” for the victim until they can get to a higher level of medical care.

The proactive approach from the fire department is exceptionable. The firefighters were trained in Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) and the Rescue Task Force (RTF) program. These are a great resource for members of the fire department to initiate lifesaving care to those injured. In many cases of an active shooter event, the emergency medical system (EMS) is overwhelmed. If fire department members can provide medical support and offset some of the responsibilities of the EMS units on the scene, more victims can be triaged and treated in a quicker manner. This can result in more savable lives being saved.

In summary, all available resources will be utilized for a large-scale incident. It is important to break away from the old way of thinking where the fire department and EMS stages for an extended period and does not provide medical treatment in a safe environment. Fire

departments can assist with triaging, treatment, transporting, forcible entry, and an array of other responsibilities.

The article “The Use of Rescue Task Forces in Response to Active Shooter/Hostile Events” (Nichols, 2019) begins with the former mindset where law enforcement has the fire and ems resources stage for an extended period. If we want to give the victims the best chance for survival, those resources need to be deployed as quickly as possible.

It is important that law enforcement along with fire and ems resources start talking about their response protocols as soon as possible because when an event happens, it’s too late. This includes standardizing as much as possible from terminology, equipment, and understanding of responsibilities. There have been too many examples of incidents not functioning as properly as they should because of a lack of preparation. This includes establishing a unified command post, too.

In summary, there have been after action reports highlighting the lack of coordination between fire and ems and the effects that it has caused. The priority of fire and ems resources at active shooter events is to provide rapid, quality care to save as many “savable lives.”

Research Design

The design for this research paper will be qualitative. Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 4) describe qualitative research as being a form of understanding and learning about a group cause to a problem. The research is a tool to gather data about active shooter events and the preparedness level of fire departments to respond. As discussed earlier, fire departments across

the country play a vital role in the response plan to active shooter events. Unfortunately, these events have been occurring more regularly and receiving more publicity in the last two decades. This research will help illustrate the preparation and planning, or lack thereof, by fire departments for these types of events.

The research will be focusing on action research. The participants in this research should have the ability to answer the questions thoroughly and understand where their department stands with a response model. It is the intention that these participants who will be interviewed, have influence on the process in their agency to make positive changes, if needed.

This research will consist of one-on-one interviews of open-ended questions with the participants. The open-ended questions will allow the participants to go into as much detail as they wish for how their organization responds to active shooter events. The responses received will be collected and compared to other participant responses to look for similarities. The intention of the research is to be sure to not restrict data using quantitative data collection where it won't allow the participant the ability to expand answers.

Population and Sample Size

An important aspect of this research is to choose the population and sample size effectively. National Fire Protection Association (2022) states there are over 29,000 fire departments across the United States. Among these departments, there is a tremendous amount of diversity including:

- Type of department (career, combination, volunteer, etc.)
- The geographical area and population they protect
- Budgetary constraints

The population for this research will consist of chief fire officers that have an influence on the operations or process of their fire department. This is a unique way of looking at it because it does not lock potential participants into only fire chiefs of career fire departments for the sample. In the area of Pennsylvania targeted for participants, there are a limited number of career fire departments. This could make it difficult to get a decent sample size to acquire accurate data. However, there are several career fire chiefs who are overseeing firefighters in varied systems. Some of these systems are volunteer, some are part-time firefighters, and some departments are career. The important aspect is to interview a chief that has the influence to alter or change the operations. These are chief fire officers who are empowered by municipal governments to lead an organization or multiple organizations.

The chief fire officer should have no less than one year of experience in this position. This ensures the participant will have experience in their role and understand the operations of their department. Experienced chief officers will have the ability to recall the policies and procedures for their agency and describe the changes and growth or lack thereof which will be beneficial in collecting accurate data for this research paper.

The sample size for this research will consist of a minimum of 8-10 chief fire officers. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 187), qualitative face-to-face interviews will focus on a range of 6-8 participants. Performing qualitative research on 8-10 participants is on the upper range of Creswell's recommendations and should allow for better data. More participants will be recruited if we have not hit the point of data saturation.

Instruments

The instrument for this research paper will be the survey (see Appendix B). This same interview form will be used for all voluntary participants of the study. This form will ensure transparency and it being trustworthy.

The open-ended questions will be used to gather information about the research questions and sub questions of this paper. The first research questions are:

1. What type of SOG/SOP's do fire departments in the United States have for a response to an active shooter/active assailant even?

The sub question to follow up this research question is:

- a. What type of adjustments have occurred to their SOG/SOPs after an event?*

The second research question to be answered is:

2. What type of unified training/preparation among the first responders has occurred?

The sub question to follow up this research question is:

- a. What are the requirements/expectations for unified training?*
- b. What type of required training among first responders in preparation of an event is mandated by the state or local government?*

The third research question to be answered is:

3. What type of information are first responders learning after reviewing after action reports and highlighting areas of improvement to minimize the potential for repeat issues during future events?

The sub question to follow up this research question is:

- a. How are the after-action reports looking at the event from all sides?*

A pilot test will be used with non-chief officers of the participating department to ensure the validity of the answers received by the chief fire officer who is participating in the event. Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 199) discuss validity among steps in research. They state it is looking for accuracy among all the findings through different procedures. Furthermore, they discuss reliability as a consistent approach. If the answers between the chief fire officer and non-chief officer pilot are similar in response, it will help confirm the validity of the data. The intention of the test pilot is to ensure the questions are understood by anyone who would take this survey and not to guarantee the same answers between participants. Additionally, the participants will be shown the interview form and it is consistent for all the participants to ensure the reliability of the process.

Research Process

Once the last version of open-ended questions has been established, a sample list will be compiled. A list of fire departments or municipalities with career chief officers in the area will be compiled. Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 187) discuss the types of qualitative interviews that can occur, including face-to-face and using six to eight interviewees. The list should be as close to a dozen names as possible to ensure enough interested participants to hit the range of 8-10 participants. As stated earlier in the chapter, the sample list will include career chief fire officers with no less than one year of experience. Additionally, these chiefs should be in a position where they have influence to make changes, if needed. Chief fire officers who meet the criteria as stated above will be contacted via e-mail or phone call and asked if they would be willing to participate in this one-on-one interview. The participant will be asked if they need permission from a supervisor to participate in the study, and if so, to complete the procedures of their organization

before the interview. If the participant is not required to receive permission from their organization prior to participating in an interview, it will be confirmed in the informed consent (see Appendix A).

Once a list of willing participants is compiled, a non-chief officer from that department will be contacted and asked if they would participate in a pilot test interview. The individual will be assured that their identity will be kept confidential, and their responses will not be used for the final data. The purpose of the pilot test is to ensure the validity of the answers from the chief fire officer and to ensure the participant understands the questions as they were written.

After the pilot test has been completed, the chief fire officer interview will occur. This participant will have the entire process explained to them from the start of compiling literature and formulating a research idea through collecting data from participants. A consent form is signed by the participant acknowledging their voluntary commitment in this research and confirming they can remove themselves at any time. During this period, a random number will be assigned to them and from that point forward, they will only be identified by the number.

The interview will begin in a closed meeting with minimal distractions. The participant will be told the questions can be re-read for them as many times as possible. However, they cannot ask the researcher “what exactly are you looking for with these questions” to ensure there is no bias in a response by the researcher. After the series of questions have been completed with answers, the participant will be asked if they wish to have any of the questions re-read again. Once each interview has been completed, the participant will be thanked again for their time.

The information will be compiled after all the interviews have been completed. Each question will be looked at along with the individual responses. Any sort of pattern will be noted

and documented for discussion in the data analyzing section of the paper. The themes being looked for would include:

- no change in SOG's since the formulation
- changes only after a national event
- changes only after leadership movement within the organization
- other similar findings.

The findings will be looked at and categorized by:

- no change to SOG's or preparation among the department
- change after stimulus (national event)
- annual review and updates.

The type of department will be looked at considering a career fire department, a combination fire department, or a career fire chief who manages volunteer fire stations. Additionally, research comparing the ability to mandate training or participate with other first responder agencies will be looked at to see if there are any patterns.

Ethical Considerations

There are ethical considerations when conducting research. The first one is being transparent throughout the process. A participant will want to ensure they are not being "set-up" to answer questions a certain way that could be used against them later. The process this research

has gone through to formulate this paper will be explained to the participant. This includes brainstorming areas of focus for the fire service and selecting a topic. It will be explained to participants how, once a topic was selected, the background and literature review occurred to gather as much information as possible on the topic. Then, it will be explained how the researcher has reached the point of actual research being compiled. The participants will be asked if they have any questions about the process and how we have reached the point we are at to ensure transparency for all parties.

The second area that will be discussed with the participant will be the confidentiality of the interview. They will be informed that throughout the process and forever moving forward, their identity will be confidential to everyone except the researcher. This will be completed by every participant being assigned a random number and they will only be referred to by that random number in the research paper and for any discussion moving forward. A passkey of identifying the participant with their assigned number will be created. However, that key will be placed in a locked filing cabinet with only the researcher having access to it. The participants will be assured that no harm shall come to them because of participating in this survey.

The third area that will be discussed with the participant is the voluntary status of this research. They will be thanked for their willingness to participate in the goal of acquiring data. However, this is voluntary and if at any point they wish to stop or be removed from the process, that will occur.

The last area of ethical considerations that will be discussed with the participant is bias. The participant will be advised of the process that has occurred up until this point. It is the goal of the research to understand where these fire departments have grown or not in preparing their organization for active shooter responses. The first question will be broad to ensure the

participant doesn't feel locked into answering a certain way. By gathering accurate, unbiased data from chief officers, it will allow a true understanding of the information to summarize in the ending of the research paper. Regardless of what results show, the research data will be accepted to make final determinations on policies and procedures. Additionally, this information will be shared with those who have participated, and the records will be stored to ensure unbiased findings.

Summary of the research design

A lot of information went into this chapter for the methodology of the research study. The research should gather a large amount of data about chief fire officers who have the influence on the process of being able to make a positive change, if needed. A sample and population have been established that will allow for some experienced chief fire officers who should provide good, accurate insight of their department. The open-ended questions will allow the participants the ability to expand on their answer as much as they would like to offer insight of how their department functions at these types of events. The reliability and validity of this research will be covered through various forms that were discussed earlier in this paper. A fair way to compile an eligible participants list was established and having an initial test pilot confirmed will help with the validity of the research. The various ethical considerations were discussed, and a plan was compiled to ensure it is addressed. Lastly, the research process was determined and how the data will be analyzed was completed. Overall, this has reviewed all the items needed for a research design and should allow for quality, unbiased data.

Introduction – Demographics of the Participants

The interviews of the chief fire officers occurred over the span of a few weeks between mid-December and mid-January. There was difficulty reaching the goal of eight interviews. However, seven quality interviews were obtained. All the interviewees were male and had served in their position for no less than one year. While most only held their position for a few years or less, one participant had the experience of almost 20 years. All the interviewees were Caucasian, and most had post high school education.

There was diversity among the departments that were represented. While each chief fire officer was required to be fully career, the career personnel within their agency varied. Half of those interviewed represented an agency with three or fewer career staff, while the others represented a larger combination system or a fully career department. The population protected by these departments ranged from the low 20,000 to over 60,000 residents.

Research Results

The first interview question was: “What type of SOG/SOP’s do fire departments in the United States have for a response to an active shooter/active assailant event?”

The majority of responses revolved around no SOGs or limited for fire departments. Participant # 11 stated, “You have everything from nothing to they wrote the book on it.” He discussed how a few fire departments across the United States have attempted to be a driving factor in this topic. However, the majority have limited SOGs, if they have one at all. Participant #33 stated, “Typically, the SOGs will focus on the Rescue Task Force initiative. It usually doesn’t state anything about a unified command post or setting up staging points for patient care.” Participants # 44 and # 66 touched on NFPA 3000 but never went into any detail

describing the objectives behind it. Participant # 55 stated: “The SOGs will vary greatly depending on your area.” His department works with other agencies in their county to try and utilize the same model, but the objectives could be different than those of neighboring counties.

The second interview question was: “What type of adjustments have occurred to their SOG/SOPs after an event?”

Almost every participant agreed that there had been some attempt to change their department SOGs after a national event. Participant # 11 stated: “We are learning from it and making adjustments. However, we are not testing the plan after the changes. It all sounds good on paper, but when it’s implemented, is it good and functional?” Participant # 33 said something similar, “These are initially modified based on AARs. Once they are in place, they are not trained on and are forgotten about.” Participant # 44 stated: “You need to participate in an exercise that mimics that event. Take a good look at what did or did not work and you are going to learn the most from the AARs.” The outlier was participant # 77 who stated, “The Uvalde, TX report stated nothing about the fire department and their support. The reports that I have read typically show the fire department as non-existent or not prepared.”

The third interview question was: “What type of unified training/preparation among first responders have occurred?”

This question offered many similar responses. Participant #66 stated: “As far as locally, nothing, but some areas are pushing the ALERRT program.” Participant #11 said: “The biggest problem we have is getting the police department and EMS to understand and follow a unified command. This includes communication problems and understanding their individual radios.”

Both participants #22 and #44 discussed the local multicounty task force that was created after the attacks on September 11, 2001. The purpose behind this task force was to establish protocols for multiagency responses to large scale events. Also, they would utilize cost savings measures by joint purchases or federal financially supported equipment for local agencies to use. These two participants stated that the task force has worked on training for agencies on how to respond to large scale events. This included multiple active shooter drills that were sponsored by this task force. Participant #33 stated that the volunteer fire departments that he oversees had more of a desire to get equipment for this type of response before the COVID pandemic.

The fourth interview question was: “What are the requirements/expectations for unified training?”

There were many similar responses to this interview question. Participants #33, #44, and #77 all stated that there were no local requirements. Participant #77 said, “NIMS is a good starting point. This should be expected among the responders.” Participant #11 stated: “NIMS for all 1st responders. Also, there should be policies that reflect NIMS and it should be implemented at all scenes.” Participant #55 advised that they provide active shooter training in-house to all of their firefighters. Participant #66 stated: “There must be an open mind for all responders to an event. Everyone will play a role. Law enforcement can’t have the mindset of ‘I’m here to save the day’. Also, the firefighters can’t come in with the attitude of ‘I’m not running in there.’” Participant #22 discussed unified command among all the responders. He stated: “Law enforcement and ems are supposed to have unified command training. They should be holding joint training when it’s available.”

The fifth interview question is: “What type of required training among first responders in preparation of an event is mandated by the state or local government?”

This question received the most identical responses out of all of the interview questions. Participants #22, 33, 44, 55, 66, and 77 all stated there was no mandated training by state or local government. Participant #44 went on to say, “At the national level, it varies. However, there has not been any curriculum adopted by our state fire academy for active shooter responses.” Participant #11 added a little more to his response than the other participants. He stated: “There is nothing mandated, but a ‘stop the bleed’ course should be. Also, there should be training about the zones and especially the working in the warm zone for the fire departments. Another good idea would be having the fire departments working with their local police department to get an idea of operations.”

The sixth interview question is: “What type of information are first responders learning after reviewing after action reports and highlighting areas of improvement to minimize the potential for repeat issues during future events?”

A common theme among some of the participants for this question was unified command and communication. Participants #11 and #55 both stated that unified command was the biggest priority when reviewing after action reports. Participant #11 went more in depth with the actual operations of an active shooter event. He stated: “Some of the more important information being learned about these events includes the number of personnel needed, how labor intensive these events can be, the number of victims that can be located, and the type of first aid equipment, such as tourniquets needed.” Participant #22 touched on communication but he also stated: “We are learning about a unified way of speaking, meaning common terminology. We should be having awareness level training ahead of time. This will help with the connection needed between the police, fire, and ems.” Participant #44 discussed the speed to patient care and having

the ability to move to areas of care. This requires immediate engagement of fire and ems resources.

The remaining participants took a slightly different approach. Participant #33 stated: “We are learning a lot but where does it go from there? If we are discussing the hiccups or failures of the operation, what are we doing to correct those for future events?” Participant #77 stated: “The fire departments can only take so much from the after action reports of active shooter events. If you’re involved, you can understand more of what occurred. In most cases, the fire department operations is not discussed, or if it is, it’s minimal.” Participant #66 stated: “There are not a lot of people that are reviewing the after action reports. Therefore, these people are not learning from the incident. We need to shift from that old mindset. The Uvalde, TX event has started to push training again.”

The last interview question is: “How are the after-action reports looking at the event from all sides?”

This question brought some similar ideas amongst the participants. Many of these participants said the after action reports did not focus on the fire department responses nearly enough. Participant #33 stated: “There is not enough with the fire/ems response. It will micro analyze the police departments response but not the duties of fire/ems.” Participant #77 stated: “The after action report for law enforcement should be thorough. The reports that fire and ems are part of can be questionable.” Participants #55 and #66 discussed similar items. Participant #55 states: “Whoever develops the after-action report will determine the direction the report will take.” Participant #66 stated: “They are not as one report. There are varied reports that will look at the event from different angles.” Participant #11 discussed a large-scale incident that occurred in his jurisdiction. He stated: “The event that we had looked good globally. However, it wasn’t.

Where was the breakdown? Was it a fire issue? Was it a communication issue? Who is responsible to fix all of this?” Participant #22 stated: “All of the above. If you want to learn the most information, especially after a drill, you need to speak with the actors. There is only so much that evaluators can see but the actors will tell you how the responders reacted to them.”

Summary

There were many common themes in the answers received from the survey. Most participants stated fire departments have minimal, if any SOGs/SOPs for active shooter response. When discussing adjustments to SOGs/SOPs, many responses stated there are changes that occur, but organizations aren’t sticking with the implementation of them.

When asked about unified training/preparation, multiple participants responded that there is minimal training among the fire departments. A few participants did respond that a regional task force has put out programs for active shooter responses among the various disciplines. However, these programs hinge on funding, availability, and interest level among the individual departments. The question about requirements for unified training responses showed the majority responded that there are no requirements. NIMS training was mentioned by a couple of participants. However, the participants were almost unanimous when stating there are no mandates by the state or local government for required training to respond to an active shooter event.

A common theme about items being learned after reviewing after action reports is lack of a unified command and poor communication at an event. The majority of participants feel that the after action reports are not looking at an event from all sides. This is a focused law

enforcement event and the majority of times that is the sole focus of the report. If the fire/ems operations are discussed in the report, it tends to be minimal.

Summary of the Results

Summarizing the data that was collected during the interviews, there seems to be a large disconnect between the confidence level the fire department should have to provide quick, critical care to victims of active shooter/active assailant events and where we find ourselves. There were common themes that were shared among the participating chief officers. Many of the departments that were represented in this study seem to be lacking an SOG/SOP for how they are to respond to an active shooter event. While some are working on a policy and they know it needs to be done soon, many are still lacking one.

There was interesting discussion on the lack of unified command at incidents. Some of the participants shared that they realize this tends to be a priority in the after-action reports, but they can struggle with this in their own agency. There were some different reasons that were shared including their local police departments have not been great about sharing information for upcoming events or how law enforcement will be operating at an event. Also, discussions are lacking in preparing similar guidelines for response with ems agencies because of the constant turn over of employees in ems leadership roles, as one example of a struggle.

A last theme that was apparent after the interview was lack of communication among the different disciplines. This problem stemmed from multiple sources including inability to communicate on the same radio frequency, lacking understanding of how to properly use the radios, and pushing the importance of getting real time information shared among all agencies to focus on patient triage and care as quickly as possible. We are living in a time where technology

has given us the upper hand to perform better at our job because of the resources it offers. It is our responsibility to ensure nothing hampers and restricts this benefit.

Conclusion Based Upon the Results

There were many take aways from this research project on a topic that is still relatively new for the fire department. Active shooter events have gained public attention since the Columbine High School event in 1999. Since that time, there are dozens of events happening across the United States annually. These are very resource dependent due to the number of victims, complexity of the situation, size of the location, and various other points. The fire department response to these events is not a brand-new concept brought to light in the past couple years. However, it appears that many organizations take the approach of a high hazard, low risk and do not train or plan for the possibility of an event occurring in their district.

Over the years of reviewing these events through different forms of sharing, including after action reports, it is apparent that the fire department plays a critical role in providing life saving care to victims. Also, there are additional benefits to having the fire department on the scene and being able to provide other assistance throughout an event. Thus, the introduction of the rescue task force model of response and various other platforms of patient care. It was deemed a necessity to provide quick medical care to victims thus offering the best chance for survival.

For this collaborated effort to occur which includes addressing the suspect and providing quick medical care, the disciplines responding need to know each other's operations. This starts with preplanning and training for an event before one occurs. While some agencies have attempted to be proactive and participate in a drill, other agencies have not. Some of the agencies

that have practiced and critiqued after the drill, never implemented the changes needed or followed up to ensure it wouldn't happen for the next practice or real event. Additionally, the priority and importance of having a unified command cannot be expressed enough. So many of the after-action reports suggest the lack of a unified command caused issues to varying extents. If a unified command was in place from the initial stage, would it have allowed for a better response? More lives to be saved?

The lack of SOGs/SOPs and continued training was apparent throughout this project. For those agencies that had an SOG, how often are they reviewed? Are they relevant for how your fire department is equipped to respond today? Do you have additional or less staffing today than when the policy was written? Who else are you relying on for support to your operations? Career vs. volunteer fire department?

Pre-planned training is just what it says: pre-planned. The day of an active shooter event should not be the first time you meet the law enforcement patrol supervisor or the EMS supervisor. These drills should be on a repeated annual schedule to ensure they do not go forgotten. If coordination, cost, or resource availability does not allow for a full-scale drill on an annual basis, get the leaderships of the agencies together to refine the guidelines and fill in any gaps that are brought up through events that have occurred in the United States over the past year.

Limitations

There were limitations from this study. The area of focus was central Pennsylvania career fire chiefs. The idea behind the career chiefs was these are most likely, individuals in stable positions with a good chance of not being replaced annually. In most career fire departments, the

fire chief, deputy chiefs, and assistant chiefs are appointed by the mayor or council. The chiefs positions can change when the authority over that position feels it is needed but it is usually not on an annual basis. Many of the chiefs interviewed have been in their position for at least a few years and have the experience of how their department has progressed or failed to progress through responsibilities at active shooter events.

The geographical focus of central Pennsylvania allowed for a small number of eligible participants due to the lack of an abundance of career fire chiefs in the area. In this region, there are some small 3rd class cities that provide professional fire protection. Additionally, there are some combination departments that have only a career chief or some with career and volunteer staffing mixed. Once you get outside of the immediate central Pennsylvania area, the career chief staffing model becomes scarce until you reach the Pittsburgh or Philadelphia area, with some exceptions.

Most of the fire departments in central Pennsylvania are volunteer. This can cause a struggle in confirming operations at an event such as active shooter incidents. Many volunteer departments lack SOGs/SOPs for operations outside of basic fire suppression. This is a limitation for those members who would respond to an event because of the lack of planning. Also, there is most likely been little to no formal or informal training on the subject.

A survey was compiled among the fire departments in Lancaster County in 2020 (Dommel, 2020). This was voluntary and sent out to chief officers both volunteer and career. The questions referenced active shooter events and training/preparedness for their individual department. The results were very unfortunate considering there was an active shooter event in Lancaster County in 2006. All the respondents were volunteer chief officers due to the majority volunteer fire service within Lancaster County. Most respondents for that survey stated they had

little to no training about active shooter response. Also, there were very few that had met with other local disciplines to train or discuss roles during an event. The number of volunteer firefighters is dwindling at a rapid rate in central Pennsylvania and the focus has been on recruitment and retention and not as much on operations. A limitation is trying to get quality participants for additional research. The focus needs to be more on the career fire service for a better chance of departments with operational plans in place for an active shooter event.

A limitation was not being able to generalize every fire department across the United States and their ability to respond to a similar event. The sample size was small and it was located within 60 miles of each other. To get many chief officer participants that met the criteria, the area of focus would have had to increase tremendously.

Some career fire departments have SOGs/SOPs to reference their operations. While some career fire departments don't have an SOG on active shooter response, they may have another similar operational plan to reference for dealing with a large number of patients.

Implications and Recommendations to the Field

There are a few common recommendations for all fire departments after this research. The common themes from agencies included lacking unified command, lack of SOGs, lack of preplanned training for an event, and lack of communication. The first recommendation would be for fire departments to work closely with the other local disciplines and produce an outline of how their unified command will work. These agencies can practice with it during a prescheduled community event, such as a parade or other large turnout event.

The second recommendation would be for agencies to formulate an SOG on their response to an event. Once that has been completed, there should be a push for buy-in at the

county level because the other mutual aid agencies will be the one coming to assist during a large event. It would be important for everyone to operate under the same guidelines. The SOG should discuss communication including radio frequencies for responding units, staging units, operating units, and other support roles.

The third recommendation would be to get serious about preplanned training events. Preplanning doesn't require a large full-scale drill at a facility. It could be a table top exercise among the command staffs or discussing operations and charting them on a dry erase board. The open dialogue has to happen before an event occurs.

Recommendations for Future Research

A promising area for future research would be how many fire departments are familiar with NFPA 3000 and the standard for an active shooter/hostile event response. This is new but is a good starting point for those departments that are not sure how to create an SOG for this event.

A second area for future research would be how many counties have adopted similar protocols and are requiring all agencies to follow them. Some restrictions for the requirements could come between a commonwealth vs. a state and who has the final say in the policy.

Conclusion

In wrapping up this research project, there was a lot of information obtained through reading, reviewing, researching, and interviews. All of this information will be used to help drive fire departments in being better prepared in providing an important role at an active shooter event. Recapping what type of SOGs/SOPs do fire departments have for a response to an active shooter event varies. There are some that have an SOG but many either do not have an SOG or have not reviewed and provided scheduled updates.

The research is showing that some fire departments have determined that it is important to be prepared for an event despite the high hazard, low risk potential. Unfortunately, we as the United States fire service are not where we should be in an active preparedness role. Arguments can be made that the fire service consistently gets new responsibilities placed on them and they are required to determine how to manage the influx. While that can be a valid argument, active shooter response is an evolving event that truly requires all disciplines to work together with the priority being patient treatment. The ability of the disciplines to work together in a timely manner will directly correlate with victim survivability. We have all taken an oath to protect our communities and it is our responsibility to provide care for those in need. There is no longer room for excuses about why we continue to struggle with concerns or areas of improvement that arise continuously in after action reports. Learn from past events, correct them to ensure they are not repeat issues, and continue to provide the top level of service our communities deserve.

References

American Psychological Association. (2022). Bullying. <https://www.apa.org/topics/bullying>

Apex Officer. (2020). Active shooter and mass shooting facts.

<https://www.apexofficer.com/active-shooter-facts>

Boran, L. & Taskan, I. (2021). Causes of violence in schools. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education*, 11(4), 165-69

<https://www.tojned.net/journals/tojned/volumes/tojned-volume11-i04.pdf>

Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). Research design (5th ed.) SAGE Publications.

Dommel, D. A. (2020) *Are fire departments prepared to respond to an active shooter/mass casualty event?* {Unpublished Manuscript}. Anna Maria College.

Frazzano, T. & Snyder, G. M. (2014). Hybrid targeted violence: Challenging conventional “active shooter” response strategies. *Homeland security affairs*, volume 10, article 3.

<https://www.hsaj.org/articles/253>

Hughes, C. (2019). Addressing violence in education: From policy to practice. *Prospects* 48, 23-28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-019-09445-1>

Melmer, P., Carlin, M., Castater, C., Koganti, D., Hurst, S., Tracy, B., Grant, A., Williams, K., Smith, R., Dente, C., & Sciarretta, J. (2019). Mass casualty shootings and emergency preparedness: A multidisciplinary approach for an unpredictable event. *National Library of Medicine*, volume 12: 1013-1021

<https://doi.org/10.2147/JMDH.S21902>

Merrigan, D. (2019, August 1). *The fire code: A tool against terrorism*. Firehouse.

<https://www.firehouse.com/prevention-investigation/article/12318341/the-fire-code-a-tool-against-terrorism>

National Fire Protection Association. (2022, September). *U.S. fire department profile*. News & Research. <https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/Emergency-Responders/US-fire-department-profile>

Nichols, J. K. (2019). The use of rescue task forces in response to active shooter/hostile events. [White paper]. Leadership Command College. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11875/2874>

Price, J. & Khubchandani, J. (2019). School firearm violence prevention practices and policies: functional or folly? *Violence and gender*, volume 6(3), 154-167
<https://doi10.1089/vio.2018.0044>

Pulvermacher, J. (2016, April). Active shooter response: Rescue in the warm zone. *Fire engineering*. <https://www.fireengineering.com/firefighting/active-shooter-response-rescue-in-the-warm-zone/#gref>

Rielage, R. (2022, September). 8 recommendations for fire/EMS from the FEMA Oct. 1 After-Action Report. *EMS1, Mass casualty incidents*. <https://www.ems1.com/mass-casualty-incidents-mci/articles/8-recommendations-for-fireems-from-the-fema-oct-1-after-action-report-ufzUxzTykC4Wmsak/>

Rios, A. (2022). "Defunding Law Enforcement: Fire Departments' Perspective on Implementing the National Fire Protection Association 3000 Standard When Preparing for an Active Shooter Mass Casualty Incident". [Doctoral dissertations, University of Central Florida.]
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd2020/1080>

Schildkraut, J., Formica, M. K., & Malatras, J. (2018, May). Can mass shooting be stopped? To address the problem, we must better understand the phenomenon. *Rockefeller Institute of government*. <https://rockinst.org/issue-area/can-mass-shootings-be-stopped/>

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Dustin A. Dommel

Executive Fire Officer Program

National Fire Academy

Qualitative Research Project

I _____ knowingly and with good judgement, am voluntarily participating in a one-on-one interview with Dustin Dommel. Mr. Dommel is a student in the *Executive Fire Officer Program* through The National Fire Academy. This interview is part of a research project investigating fire department preparedness levels at active shooter/active assailant events.

- I am of at least 18 years of age and of sound mind
- I am serving in the position of a chief fire officer with a fire department or municipal authority
- I have served in the position of chief fire officer for no less than 1 year
- I am authorized to represent/discuss/present on behalf of the fire department or municipality of which I am employed
- I am in a position where I can change or influence change in operations of my department
- I am authorizing the interviewer to audio record me and document my statements
- I know that my identity will remain confidential, except for the interviewer
- I am participating in this one-on-one interview voluntarily and may remove myself from this process at any time
- I have been given the background of this research project and was allowed to ask questions about it
- I will not benefit financially from my participation in this interview
- I will receive a signed copy of this informed consent form

I have read the above and confirm and/or agree with all the bullet points

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Interviewer Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Qualitative Research Project

Dustin A. Dommel
Executive Fire Officer Program
National Fire Academy

Interview Details

Assigned #: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Participant Name: _____

Participant Title: _____ Participant Phone Number: _____

Agency Name: _____

Agency Address: _____

Type of Department: _____

Length in grade: _____ Years Sex: _____

Population Protected: _____ Total Personnel in Department: _____

Questions

Question #1: What type of SOG/SOP's do fire departments in the United States have for a response to an active shooter/active assailant event?

Question #2: What type of adjustments have occurred to their SOG/SOPs after an event?

Question #3: What type of unified training/preparation among the first responders have occurred?

Question #4: **What are the requirements/expectations for unified training?**

Question #5: **What type of required training among first responders in preparation of an event is mandated by the state or local government?**

Question #6: **What type of information are first responders learning after reviewing after action reports and highlighting areas of improvement to minimize the potential for repeat issues during future events?**

Question #7: **How are the after-action reports looking at the event from all sides?**

Additional Notes