Homeland Security for Telecommunicators

Homeland Security for Telecommunicators prepares public safety telecommunicators to recognize, assess, and respond to terrorism-related threats and incidents. The course examines terrorist organizations and tactics, weapons of mass destruction, the Department of Homeland Security, hazardous materials, nuclear, biological, and chemical agents, explosive devices, and incident management. Emphasis is placed on the telecommunicator's role as the first point of contact in the emergency services chain, including information gathering, responder protection, interagency communications, resource coordination, incident command, and maintaining communications control during high-risk events.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to:

1. Discuss major types of terrorist groups and distinguish among domestic, foreign, and lone-individual threats.
2. Identify common terrorist goals, targets, threat types, and weapons of mass destruction.
3. Explain the purpose, mission, responsibilities, and organizational role of the Department of Homeland Security.
4. Classify hazardous materials and explain the use of placards, the Emergency Response Guidebook, Safety Data Sheets, and other HazMat resources.
5. Describe the characteristics, hazards, and response considerations associated with nuclear, biological, and chemical agents.
6. Recognize the dangers posed by explosive and secondary explosive devices.
7. Apply the Journalistic Investigative Approach when gathering information during terrorism and WMD-related calls.
8. Explain the role of ICS, NIMS, resource management, and effective communications in managing major incidents.
9. Describe the telecommunicator's responsibilities for protecting responders, coordinating resources, communicating with other agencies, and supporting response and recovery operations.

Module 1 – Introduction to Homeland Security for Telecommunicators

This module introduces the homeland security challenges facing public safety telecommunicators and establishes the overall purpose of the course. Learners review course objectives and consider the telecommunicator's role when receiving a direct terrorist threat. A scenario involving a reported vehicle bomb challenges learners to consider appropriate call-handling actions and response priorities.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain why terrorism and homeland security issues are relevant to public safety telecommunicators.
2. Identify the major subject areas addressed throughout the course.
3. Describe the telecommunicator's role when receiving an apparent terrorist threat.
4. Identify immediate information-gathering and responder-notification considerations during a reported bomb threat.
5. Recognize the importance of preparedness, situational awareness, and agency procedures during homeland security incidents.

Content/Activities

- Homeland Security Challenges
- Course Objectives
- Role of the Telecommunicator
- Terrorist Threat Scenario
- Vehicle Bomb Scenario Discussion
- Brainteasers 1–3

Module 2: What Is a Terrorist?

This module examines terrorism, terrorist organizations, domestic and foreign terrorist threats, potential targets, and the operational effects of terrorism on 911 communications centers. Learners explore types and basic concepts of terrorism, historical attacks, foreign terrorist organizations, domestic terrorist and hate groups, lone individuals, terrorist goals, threat types, and potential targets within their jurisdictions.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define a terrorist act and distinguish among major types of terrorism presented in the course.
2. Describe basic concepts and goals commonly associated with terrorist activity.
3. Identify examples of foreign, domestic, and lone-individual terrorist threats discussed in the course.
4. Identify potential terrorist targets and assess basic vulnerabilities within a jurisdiction.
5. Explain how a terrorism-related event may affect call volume, radio traffic, public fear, responder safety, and communications-center operations.

Content/Activities

- Terrorist Acts, Types, and Basic Concepts
- Historical Terrorist Attacks
- Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Terrorist Groups
- Domestic Terrorism and Hate Groups
- Lone Individuals
- Activity 2: Identify Potential Terrorist Targets
- Terrorist Goals, 911 Issues, and Threat Types
- Videos and Brainteasers

Module 3: Weapons of Mass Destruction

This module introduces weapons of mass destruction and their implications for telecommunicators and emergency responders. Learners examine WMD characteristics, the “three headed dragon” model of mass casualties, hazardous materials, and secondary devices, as well as the T.R.A.C.E.M.P. categories of harm. The module emphasizes the telecommunicator’s primary responsibilities, investigative questioning, multitasking, responder protection, and the application of these principles to a simulated poisonous-gas incident.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define weapons of mass destruction and identify their primary categories.
2. Explain the “three headed dragon” model involving mass casualties, hazardous materials, and secondary devices.
3. Identify the T.R.A.C.E.M.P. categories associated with WMD effects.
4. Apply the Journalistic Investigative Approach to gather critical information and protect responders.
5. Analyze a simulated WMD incident for communication, safety, response, and information-gathering concerns.

Content/Activities

- Weapons of Mass Destruction
- International WMD Controls and WMD Characteristics
- Three Headed Dragon Model
- T.R.A.C.E.M.P.
- Telecommunicator Primary Responsibilities
- Journalistic Investigative Approach
- Video: *Terror at Harford Mall Part 1*
- Harford Mall Scenario and Brainteasers

Module 4: Department of Homeland Security

This module examines the formation, mission, organization, responsibilities, and initiatives of the Department of Homeland Security. Learners consider information sharing, emergency preparedness, infrastructure protection, border and transportation security, planning, continuity and redundancy, contingency procedures, and the National Terrorism Advisory System.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Explain why the Department of Homeland Security was established and describe its primary missions.
2. Identify major agencies, responsibilities, and initiatives associated with DHS as presented in the course.
3. Explain the importance of interagency information sharing and coordinated homeland security operations.
4. Describe the importance of local, county, state, and federal disaster planning and communications-center contingency planning.
5. Differentiate between elevated and imminent threat alerts within the National Terrorism Advisory System.

Content/Activities

- Department of Homeland Security and DHS Mission
- DHS Organization and Responsibilities
- P.A.T.R.I.O.T. Act
- DHS Initiatives
- Disaster and Agency Planning
- Communications-Center Contingency Planning
- National Terrorism Advisory System
- Video: *National Terrorism Advisory System* and Brainteasers

Module 5: Hazardous Materials

This module prepares telecommunicators to recognize hazardous-material incidents, obtain useful information from callers, and assist responders in identifying materials from a safe distance. Learners explore HazMat classifications, placards and UN numbers, CHEMTREC, the National Response Center, the Emergency Response Guidebook, isolation and protective-action zones, wind shifts, and Safety Data Sheets.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the priorities associated with hazardous-material and WMD incidents.
2. Identify the nine DOT hazardous-material classes and interpret basic placard information.
3. Explain how callers may safely provide colors, numbers, labels, and other clues useful to responders.
4. Use the structure of the Emergency Response Guidebook to identify response information and protective-action guidance.
5. Describe the roles of CHEMTREC, the National Response Center, weather information, and Safety Data Sheets during HazMat incidents.

Content/Activities

- WMD and HazMat Incident Priorities
- Hazardous Materials and DOT Classifications
- HazMat Detection and Identification
- CHEMTREC and National Response Center
- Emergency Response Guidebook
- Initial Isolation and Protective Action Zones
- Blow Back and Weather Considerations
- Safety Data Sheets and Brainteasers

Module 6: Nuclear Agents

This module examines the hazards associated with nuclear and radiological agents. Learners distinguish nuclear weapons from radiological dispersion devices, examine dirty bombs, radiation types, contamination versus exposure, radiation detection, and methods for reducing exposure through time, distance, and shielding.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the nuclear and radiological threats presented in the course.
2. Explain how radiological dispersion devices and dirty bombs are designed to spread radioactive material.
3. Differentiate among alpha, beta, and gamma radiation.
4. Distinguish radiation contamination from radiation exposure.
5. Explain how time, distance, and shielding can reduce radiation exposure.

Content/Activities

- Nuclear Agents
- Radiological Dispersion Devices
- Dirty Bombs
- Nuclear Release and Radioactivity
- Alpha, Beta, and Gamma Radiation
- Radiation Detection
- Contamination vs. Exposure
- Protection From Radiation and Brainteasers

Module 7: Biological Agents

This module examines biological warfare and bioterrorism, including the characteristics, dissemination, and health effects of biological agents. Learners study bacteria, viruses, and toxins and review examples including anthrax, plague, smallpox, Ebola, botulinum, and ricin.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Define biological warfare and explain how biological agents may be used in bioterrorism.
2. Describe characteristics that make biological agents difficult to detect and potentially dangerous.
3. Differentiate among bacteria, viruses, and biological toxins.
4. Identify the routes of exposure, incubation considerations, and symptoms presented for selected biological agents.
5. Recognize major biological agents discussed in the course, including anthrax, plague, smallpox, Ebola, botulinum, and ricin.

Content/Activities

- Biological Warfare
- Biological Agent Characteristics and Dissemination
- Types of Biological Agents
- Anthrax and Recent Anthrax Cases
- Plague and Smallpox
- Ebola
- Botulinum and Ricin
- Brainteasers

Module 8: Chemical Agents

This module examines chemical agents, their effects, environmental clues, routes of exposure, and implications for responders and the public. Learners compare chemical and biological incidents, distinguish major classes of chemical agents, and examine the threat of explosive and secondary explosive devices.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Describe the characteristics and common forms of chemical agents.
2. Identify environmental clues and physical symptoms that may indicate a chemical release.
3. Explain how chemical incidents differ from biological incidents in onset, contamination, and responder hazards.
4. Differentiate among blister, choking, blood, and nerve agents.
5. Explain the dangers associated with explosive devices and secondary explosive devices during terrorism incidents.

Content/Activities

- Chemical Agents and Chemical Exposure
- Environmental Clues and Physical Symptoms
- Chemical vs. Biological Attacks
- Classes of Chemical Agents
- Blister, Choking, Blood, and Nerve Agents
- Explosive Devices
- Secondary Explosive Devices
- Chemical/Explosive Incident Brainteasers

Module 9: Incident Management and Communications

This module integrates the course material by focusing on incident management, threat credibility, interagency coordination, ICS, NIMS, resource management, and effective emergency communications. Learners examine how telecommunicators assess incoming information, work within standardized command structures, support resource coordination, communicate clearly during complex incidents, and carry out detection, protection, response, recovery, and incident-intelligence responsibilities.

Module Objectives

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

1. Evaluate threat information by considering credibility, corroboration, specificity, imminence, and potential consequences.
2. Explain the purpose and major features of the Incident Command System and its role in multi-agency response.
3. Describe the purpose and major components of the National Incident Management System.
4. Explain how resource management, integrated communications, accountability, and unified command support effective incident operations.
5. Apply effective communication principles to gather critical information, dispatch appropriate resources, maintain communications control, and interact with multiple agencies.

Content/Activities

- Determining Threat Credibility
- Incident Command System
- NIMS and NIMS Components
- Unified Command and Integrated Communications
- Resource Management
- Enhancing Communications
- 3 “C”s of Effective Communication
- Summary and Brainteasers

Course Completion Criteria

To successfully complete this course and earn continuing education hours, learners must achieve a minimum score of 75%. The quiz must be completed within one hour.

- CE hours awarded: 2
- Certificate duration: 12 Months

Technical Requirements

- Desktop, laptop, or mobile device
- Speakers or headphones
- High-speed Internet access
- A current web browser