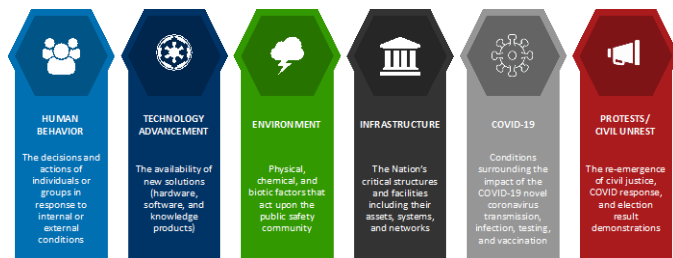


THE CHALLENGE

The changes that first responders face in their operating environment – including terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, an increasing focus on an all-hazards approach since Hurricane Katrina, and current and emerging threats – call for a recurring assessment of responder capability needs. Project Responder 6 (PR 6) is a coordinated effort across first responder disciplines to identify and validate common needs. This latest iteration of an effort that began in 2001 brings together responders from traditional (i.e., fire service, law enforcement, emergency medical services (EMS), emergency management (EM)) and non-traditional (e.g., public health, public works, medical examiner/coroner, search and rescue) response agencies. The study identified six distinct factors that may have an impact on responders' operating environment: human behavior, technology advancement, environment, infrastructure, COVID-19, and protest/civil unrest.



The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) is the sponsor of Project Responder 6 and uses the outcomes to guide research, development, and acquisition decisions for the response community. Results are also used by academia, private industry, and other domestic and international agencies and associations to guide the development of new capabilities.

PURPOSE

Consistent with S&T's mission to understand the needs of the responder community and enable responders to operate safely, effectively, and efficiently, the purpose of PR 6 is to help agencies and associations formulate strategic decisions and frame guidance for technology initiatives and planning to meet the needs of responders in a constantly evolving operating environment.

IMPACT

Prior to the initial Project Responder effort, the assessment of capability needs and potential solutions lacked a unified effort. Responder associations tended to focus on issues within their own disciplines. By identifying and validating the capability needs of all types of responders in a coordinated way, S&T works with industry and the development community to equip responders with the tools and skills they need to be safer and more effective at their jobs. Since capability needs and the response environment change over time, a new iteration of Project Responder is completed approximately every three years.

WHAT'S NEW IN PR 6

The COVID-19 pandemic response, political protests, and civil unrest in 2020 and 2021 at times led to violence against the public and responders and destruction of property. The pandemic raised concerns about health and safety and new operational issues. PR 6 took these challenges into consideration by adding an assessment of related capability needs. S&T is using lessons learned and best practices to prepare the public safety community for the next major crisis.

FUTURE

First responders and other users of these study findings, including academia, private industry, and other organizations, can use these results (and have done so in the past) as the basis for future study, program development, or solution enhancement.

Future iterations of Project Responder will explore the capability domains of public health and cybersecurity. Additionally, future Project Responder efforts will examine the unique needs of tribal and territorial representatives and minority communities, as well as opportunities to collaborate with academia and across international borders.

PARTNERS AND PERFORMERS

The Project Responder 6 report was prepared by FirstLink Research and Analytics (Erie, Pennsylvania) under contract with Operations and Requirements Analysis (ORA), part of S&T's Office of Science and Engineering (OSE). ORA works with DHS components to identify and validate capability gaps and mission needs for a more secure and resilient homeland.