



OEC Trains more than 1,600 First Responders in Effort to Improve Multi-Jurisdictional Emergency Response Coordination

WASHINGTON, D.C. —The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) announced today that more than 1,600 first responders have successfully completed the All-Hazards Type III Communications Unit Leader (COML) training course, a program designed to improve multi-jurisdictional coordination among first responders for events ranging from the presidential inauguration to natural disasters.

“When it comes to improving emergency communications, training is crucial,” says Chris Essid, Director of OEC. “Better technology is one part of the solution, but COML training provides first responders with the other part of the solution, by focusing on planning, preparation, and leadership skills.”

The emergency response community identified the need for COML training and, with DHS support, helped to create this formal training program by building on the successful wildfire scenario model. As part of the National Emergency Communications Plan, OEC offered 66 COML training courses nationwide to help public safety professionals more effectively lead and coordinate communications during emergencies and large-scale events. Multi-jurisdictional events around the nation have demonstrated the benefits of consistent planning, training, and operating procedures for emergency responders at all levels of government.

Captain Al Ruiz of the Los Angeles Fire Department was a participant in the development of the COML course and has since led several training sessions. When serious brush fires broke out in Los Angeles soon after Ruiz’s first COML course, he quickly recognized fellow COML graduates from other departments contributing to the response efforts. “It was great to see them,” says Ruiz. “But even better, was to see how they were able to help right away.” According to Ruiz, COML training has helped jurisdictions standardize their planning for such incidents so that all responders are working off the same plan of action.

COML training will continue through state-sponsored courses. With the assistance of first responders, OEC developed a COML “Train-the-Trainer” course in 2009, and prepared an additional 62 instructors to lead courses throughout the country. States can formally request COML training through OEC’s Technical Assistance program, or they can organize a class by contacting OEC for a list of approved instructors.

For more information on COML training, please contact comltraining@hq.dhs.gov or visit <http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFEKOM/currentprojects/comltraining/>.