

T-1: The Nevada Test Site's Unique Training Area



Introduction

To increase domestic preparedness for all types of terrorist threats, the National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office (NNSA/NSO) provides a unique training ground for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) first responder training at the Nevada Test Site (NTS), located 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas. At the NTS, first responders are taught to detect, prepare, prevent, respond and recover from terrorist acts through research, development, testing and evaluation, and intelligence support activities.



Emergency first responders search a staged automobile accident site for a radiation source at the T-1 training area.

Background

Specialized radiological training was originally offered to first responders at the NTS in 1999. The NTS soon became a popular training ground for first responders due to its special characteristics as a large, safe, secure venue that provides realistic WMD scenarios. As the number of first responders training sessions at the NTS grew, an exclusive and specialized training area began to develop.

Disaster area

The Transportation Training Area (T-1) in Area 1 of the NTS is like no other training ground in the United States. Three atmospheric nuclear tower tests occurred at this location of the NTS: Simon, on April 25, 1953; Apple-2 on May 5, 1955; and Galileo on September 2, 1957. Apple-2, a 29-kiloton test, left low amounts of radiation in the surrounding soil, providing a realistic and safe training area today. First responders prepare for radiological emergencies, such as a radiological or nuclear weapon of mass destruction, a radiological dispersal device ("dirty bomb") or an improvised nuclear device. Other first responder training providers must simulate the radiological threat; at T-1, the soil emits elevated levels of radiation, yet poses minimal risk to students.



A derailed locomotive and rail cars provide a realistic transportation accident scene for trainees.

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After completion in 2004, T-1 covered more than 10 acres with more than 20 separate training areas that include various staged realistic transportation accidents. First responders training at T-1 encounter a crashed authentic 737 airliner lying in pieces across the desert, as well as helicopter accidents and other small aircraft collisions. Trucks, buses, and a derailed locomotive and rail cars add to the transportation accident scene, providing a variety of different disaster scenarios. After formal classroom training, responders training at T-1 are given hands-on experience working in radiation fields while learning the basic operation of radiation detectors, dosimeters and analog survey meters such as the Ludlum 14C.

Who trains at T-1?

T-1 is a training ground utilized in an extensive emergency first responder training program. The Counter Terrorism Operations Support (CTOS) Program at the NTS oversees and conducts training courses and exercises at T-1. This provides local first responders with the tools they need to protect their communities from various threats.

Emergency response personnel from the following disciplines qualify for the training:

- Law Enforcement
- Emergency Medical Services
- Emergency Management Agency
- Fire Service
- Hazardous Materials (HazMat)
- Public Works
- Governmental Administrative
- Public Safety Communications
- Health Care
- Public Health
- Other skilled support personnel who provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations.



An actual 737 airplane fuselage is scattered in pieces across the T-1 training area to simulate a plane crash.

The NTS training program is sponsored in large part by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Preparedness Directorate.

The future of T-1

T-1 will continue as a unique training ground for emergency first responders. Plans call for increasing the yearly numbers of responders that train at the T-1 site, as well as expanding the types of programs offered.

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