



THE NECP

National Emergency Communications Plan

NECP Spotlight: Incorporating Mental Health and Human Factors into Training and Exercises

INTRODUCTION

Emergency responders face many difficult challenges on the job that could impact their mental health off the job. With the added pressure brought on by an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and political and civil unrest, those who protect and serve are in need of resources to help manage and reduce job-related stress. Recognizing this, emergency response agencies across the country are beginning to offer new training to help employees prioritize improving mental health.

The National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) recommends that public safety organizations consider human factors in their training and exercises to address the stressors that personnel face through exposure to voice, video, and data information. This spotlight examines one aspect of how human factors are being considered, and highlights the positive impact of the resilience training offered to the Norfolk Police Department (NPD) and the South Dakota Highway Patrol (SDHP).

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK

In 2018, the Bureau of Justice Assistance awarded grant funding to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to deliver mental health resilience training to law enforcement agencies across the country. IACP partnered with the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Department to tailor their existing military resilience training to best support law enforcement. The military training, which started in 2009, was highly successful with more than 55,000 U.S. Army soldiers completing the "train-the-trainer" program and going on to teach the resilience skills to hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Similar to the military training, the law enforcement training is a two-phase "train-the-trainer" program where attendees learn core skills of mind, connection, and energy in phase one, and how to deliver the training to others in the second phase. This model allows agencies to bring this training to surrounding organizations and agencies. Since 2018, this law enforcement resilience training has been successfully delivered across multiple regions to approximately 30 agencies.



Self-Awareness
The ability to pay attention to your thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiological reactions.



Self-Regulation
The ability to change one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiology in the service of a desired outcome.



Mental Agility
The ability to look at situations from multiple perspectives and to think creatively and flexibly.



Strength of Character
The ability to use one's top strengths to engage authentically, overcome challenges, and create a life aligned with one's values.



Connection
The ability to build and maintain strong, trusting relationships.



Optimism
The ability to notice and expect the positive, to focus on what you can control, and to take a purposeful action.

The skills taught in the training are used to address the above mental health competencies.

Two agencies, the Norfolk Police Department (NPD) and the South Dakota Highway Patrol (SDHP), requested this training for their personnel. After receiving the training, NPD has continued to conduct the training with new staff and has expanded the training to their academy. The head trainer for NPD, Sergeant Rich Creamer, has been involved with the training of other agencies and has become a point of contact for those interested in receiving the resilience training. SDHP has continued to train the entirety of its agency across the state, with lead trainer Sergeant Kevin Kinney representing his department at conferences and workshops to demonstrate skills from the training. As training continues, the hope is for these skills to become a universal tool for public safety across the nation.

By effectively incorporating best practices learned from the training, agencies have become autonomous in training new staff as well as neighboring agencies. The training is ongoing, with new regions requesting and receiving training from the next generation of trainers. As support and adoption of the training grows, the trainings will become a standard across all public safety organizations.



NECP ALIGNMENT

To best support emergency responders as they work through both the physical and mental stresses of their jobs, it is important to provide them with the best tools to strengthen their bodies and minds. In support of this endeavor, the NECP emphasizes the development and delivery of training, exercises, and evaluation programs that enhance knowledge and target gaps in all available emergency communications technologies. The following chart illustrates the specific NECP recommendations and aligns them to actions accomplished by the Law Enforcement Resilience Training.

NECP Goal	Objective	Objective Description	Real World Example
Goal 2: Planning and Procedures	2.1	Develop and regularly update strategic plans to align with the NECP and address the integration of new emergency communications capabilities (e.g., voice, video, and data)	NPD's Training Division goal is to provide training that will improve job performance and proficiency. In 2018, NPD became the first law enforcement agency in Virginia to receive national accredited Wellness and Resiliency Training, integrating it as a "new capability" with 10 officers attending the "Train-the-Trainer" program in 2019 with the intention to complete implementation of the program department-wide by the end of 2020.
Goal 3: Training, Exercises, and Evaluation	3.1	Update and ensure the availability of training and exercise programs to address gaps in emergency communications	NPD introduced the training in their academy, establishing a baseline for mental health from the start. SDHP implemented the program across the state to equip everyone with the same tools.
Goal 3: Communications Coordination	3.2	Incorporate human factors in training and exercises to address the demands that voice, video, and data information place on personnel	The training provides law enforcement with the tools they need to reduce anxiety, improve wellness and resiliency, and quickly bounce back from the negative effects of job stress.
Goal 4: Technology and Infrastructure	4.3	Develop or update operational protocols and procedures to support interoperability across new technologies	Agencies training in wellness/resiliency are leveraging the training to change workplace culture to support the mental health of those employed. All agencies using the training also signed MOUs that stated they would continue training their department and assist in cross-agency trainings.

RESOURCES

Following the development of data-backed resilience training, law enforcement agencies have been given the tools needed to deal with the mental and physical stresses of their jobs. The "train-the-trainer" model will allow for agencies to receive the training and then train others in their agencies or surrounding areas leading to strong connections and interoperability between agencies. This training addresses NECP's incorporation of human factors in training and exercises to address the demands that voice, video, and data information place on personnel. To learn more about improving emergency communications training and exercises, visit: cisa.gov/necp.

Want to share your organization's successes and alignment to the NECP? Email us at: necp@cisa.dhs.gov.

For more information on human factors and training and exercises, please see the NECP [webinar](#) on human factors.