

“Response to Fire-as-a-Weapon Events”

This class was developed to train law enforcement and firefighting personnel how to operate when fire is either intentionally or unintentionally introduced during law enforcement operations. This course focuses on events in which there is both an armed perpetrator and a simultaneous fire.

The use of fire as a weapon adds to the complexity and lethality of any hostile incident. Not only do officers have to deal with the dangers normally associated with tactical entries and building sweeps, but fires quickly make the situation much more complex and dangerous for victims and responders. Fire growth and fire spread times do not allow for a long decision-making process; requiring law enforcement and fire departments to have contingency plans in place before the first sign of smoke or fire.

Attacks such as the complex coordinated attacks in Mumbai, India (2008) demonstrated that criminals are willing to use fire as a weapon to increase the victim count. There is an average of one event per week in the United States where fire-as-a-weapon is used in conjunction with a ballistic or explosive attack. In one third of the last 100 thwarted school shooting attacks, the perpetrators had improvised incendiary devices or improvised explosive devices.

In 2012, al-Qaeda’s monthly jihadist terror publication Inspire Magazine, dedicated the Winter 2012 edition to fire-as-a-weapon. The article called for Western jihadist to use fire to target first responders, destroy property, and cause panic in the community. In 2016, ISIS published an article in their monthly jihadist training publication Rumiyah. The article was entitled, “Just Terror Tactics” and stated that the new ISIS terror weapon is fire. The article encouraged anyone wishing to join the jihad campaign to use fire-as-a-weapon as their primary method of attack.

In this lecture, participants will learn about the history of fire-as-a-weapon in combat, at terrorism events, and during criminal activities. The participants will review multiple case studies of fire-as-a-weapon events. This course will cover the “ABC²” fire-as-a-weapon events. This includes (A) ambush, (B) barricade events, (C) civil unrest, and (C) complex-coordinated attacks. Participants will then learn about considerations in their community when addressing integrated police/fire response to these events.