

Release and Next Steps of the NFPA 3000 Standard on Active Shooter / Hostile Event Response

Voiceover

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Welcome to *The Beat*—a podcast series from the COPS Office at the Department of Justice. Featuring interviews with experts from a varied field of disciplines, *The Beat* provides law enforcement with the latest developments and trending topics in community policing.

Deborah Spence

00:16

Hello, I'm Debs Spence, your host for this podcast. *The Beat* is currently on location at the COPS Office-sponsored Next Generation Active Shooter Training Forum. Today, we're going to learn more about NFPA 3000 from the National Fire Protection Association's Emergency Services specialist, John Montes. John is the staff liaison to the technical committee for EMS, Fire Service Occupational Safety and Health, Hazardous Materials Response, and Cross Functional Emergency Preparedness and Response. A nationally registered EMT, John has worked in EMS in several different roles—from the private service Boston EMS to serving as an EMS specialist/EMS duty chief for the County of Santa Clara, California's EMS Agency. John Montes, welcome to *The Beat*.

What might have I missed in recounting your background that would be interesting for our listeners to know?

John Montes

01:06

Thank you for having me. I'm very excited to be here. There's a couple of things in my background that are pretty interesting. I had a lot of interesting events occur throughout my career and I got to work on some pretty significant special events. I'm really fortunate that I worked for Boston EMS in the early 2000s because for the last 18 years Boston's done nothing but win championships. So I worked on World Series, Super Bowls, parades, marathons, Fourth of Julys with over a million people. So I got a lot of experience in planning for high threat targets, planning for special events, and working at those events.

In California, I had a real culture shock and change in my life. And I went at 30 years old from being a grunt to being a chief, and that was quite a significant change in life and everything. But I went from working in a city that's 48 square miles to a county that's 1,300 square miles. Two thirds of it is rural and has a population of 2.2 million people. And it's also home to some of our biggest financial infrastructure in the country—Google, Apple, Facebook, at the time, Yahoo—they go up and down.

So while out there, I got to do a lot of different things. I got more involved in emergency planning, special operations, cross functional preparedness. I was a representative to the Bay Area tactical working group and I oversaw all our tactical programs for EMS. And then two years ago, because of

some family issues, I had to move back to the Massachusetts area. And I was really, really, really fortunate to land this role at the NFPA. And it came at just the perfect timing. And the NFPA was looking for someone that's not of a fire background, and that's certainly not me. And they wanted someone that was from the different world of emergency response but that work to bring people together, and that was my background.

Spence

03:05

So I don't know how familiar our listeners will be with the NFPA. So could you tell us a little about who they are?

Montes

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Sure. The NFPA was founded in 1896 in response to— because of the insurance industry complaining that there was too many fires. It was actually founded in Boston, like most good things are, like America. So we're really fortunate to be in Massachusetts. We've been around for a really long time and what we do is we make safety standards. We're a standards development organization. NFPA standards are around you anywhere you go all day and all night. The way your buildings are constructed—the sprinklers, the exit signs, the doors, the locks, the mechanisms—all of those things can be found in NFPA standards.

But we're expanding out. And a lot of people see the— hear the F in NFPA and they think fire, but NFPA standards are for a lot more than that. We're working on a standard for space ports. We do standard for health care, rockets, gas, and then all kinds of things for first responders.

Spence

04:15

So NFPA cares about a lot more than just fire codes. I guess the recently released NFPA 3000 Standard on Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response is an example of that. Could you tell us a little bit more about NFPA 3000's origin story?

Montes

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Sure. NFPA 3000 came about after the Pulse nightclub event in Orlando. What happened was they had their after-action meeting, one of their first ones, and the three big—you know, Orlando police, Orlando fire, the county sheriffs, the county fire, their ambulance provider, that's their backup which was American Medical Response—and then actually some of their hospitals were all at this meeting. And they were talking about, well, what should we have done before this incident? Like, what are the things we should have had in place that we didn't.

And as they looked around at each other, everyone shook their head and said there's nothing out there that says these are things you absolutely have to do as a community to be ready for these incidents. So that was the impetus for NFPA 3000. They talked about what, well, what you know, what body can make

a standard that can affect all of us. And someone in the room said the NFPA, and they wrote the request. And then from there, when the NFPA received it, we put it out for input for the public and we received overwhelming support. Ninety-seven percent said you guys need to make the standard. So we went out and we found our group, our committee that works on these standards. And the way that we do that is we find people from all over the place and we say, you know, come together and form consensus and find—create—those minimums. And that’s what we did with 3000.

Spence

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So what’s an example of what people will find in 3000? Is it a bunch of fire guys telling law enforcement how to tactically manage active-shooter events?

Montes

06:04

Great question. Absolutely not, the one thing you won’t find in 3000 is tactics because your local tactics are based on your local risk assessment, your local resources, and your local capabilities. There’s no way we could standardize that for everybody around the country. And NFPA standards are global. Imagine the tactics here being very different from the tactics in Abu Dhabi or in Paris, all places that use NFPA standards. So we needed to create something that was universal but gave everybody that basic building block to come together.

And in 3000, what you’ll find is those minimums you need to achieve for the purposes of preparedness for planning and also for training your people. And not the tactics that you’re training because that’s your local thing but at least give you those building blocks. And then also, you’ll see the requirements, those minimum requirements for exercising.

Finally, we have a standard that says if you’re a facility of certain types, you have to do an annual exercise for these types of incidents. How many places just try to ignore them or just try not to do them? But as NFPA standards have proven in other worlds, an annual exercise or a quarterly exercise works. Here’s a fun fact. Did you know that not one single student has died in a school fire since 1956?

Spence

07:26

No.

Montes

07:27

Fire codes work. And we can do the same for these. Is it going to be perfect? No. And we’re never going to be able to stop these things. And we know that 3000 isn’t going to prevent the next active shooter. What it is going to do is make us more ready. And if we can save one extra life next time it happens, we’ve achieved something.

Spence

07:46

So who do you see then as the primary audience for NFPA 3000?

Montes

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You know, it's designed so that whatever your role is in the community there's a little bit in there for you. But I like to think of the primary audience as our leaders. And when I say leaders, I mean our elected leaders and our response leaders. If those people get on board, they bring the rest of the community with them. So I would say that primary audience is them. But if you're listening to this podcast and you're a street officer in Aurora or you're a street officer in San Bernardino, there's something in there for you. There's something in there for the line paramedic or the line firefighter. There's also something in there for the school principal or the school custodian or the mom that's wondering what communities are doing to be safer. It's not giving away the bag. It's not telling the bad guys what we're doing. But at least it gives you that sense of, okay, they're working together.

Spence

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Could you think of an example of what some of these people that you just mentioned might find if they read through NFPA 3000?

Montes

08:46

Sure. So say you're a line police officer and you go through 3000. What it says for you in your role as a street officer is that you need to be trained in threat-based medical care which is mainly bleeding control but it's self-care, buddy care, public care. You know, a lot of our officers in this country now are carrying individual first aid kits or IFAKs and with little tourniquets and bleeding control equipment. 3000 is requiring that. It's saying that's not an option anymore, we've got to do that, we've got to be able to care for ourselves. And, frankly, we're seeing that officers carrying that equipment is saving lives. So why not standardize that and make that the minimum? So that's one thing for the line officer.

Let's say you're a school principal, or even better, a custodian. One of my favorite things to talk about for schools is the use of barricade devices on doors. 3000 says don't use them. It specifically references NFPA 101 which is the Life Safety Code. The Life Safety Code is that magical code that keeps us safe from fire in any public building and many others. It says instead of a barricade device, use a code-compliant lock, have a mechanism in place to be able to unlock it. Specifically, if you're inside a room, you should be able to lock that room with a single motion from the inside without having to open the door. But me as a responder should be able to access the room from the outside so that I can with a key, key card, or keypad, enter the room and render care for you. That's that balance of safety and security that 3000 is trying to achieve and it's referencing the other codes to make it easier for you to find it all in one place.

Spence

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So the law enforcement community probably isn't as familiar to having standards for operations at a national level the way the fire service is.

Montes

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Yeah.

Spence

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How do you think standards like this could be helpful to law enforcement agencies or even this one in particular might be easier to talk about?

Montes

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Sure. So it's kind of a two layer thing. Law enforcement really relies on state regulations, right, for what their rules are within their states. And we don't— it's a little harder for law enforcement to get operational standards. And that's one of the big reasons also that we don't have tactics in an NFPA 3000, because there's no way to standardize that. You have law enforcement agencies with over a thousand officers and you have law enforcement agencies with two in a coverage area of 150 square miles. So instead what we've done is we've given law-enforcement those minimum building blocks of knowledge that their officer should have.

So here are some examples: other than the threat-based care, how about what the local response for medical procedures would be if there's an active shooter or hostile event; how about knowing what those are; how about requiring that you train with them at least once a year if possible, again, a soft requirement but at least encouraging those positive behaviors for working together in a group.

The other thing it does is it really brings law enforcement into the concept of unified command. And what we've learned from previous incidents and recent ones in fact within the last two years is that unified command is hard. Unified command is something law enforcement and fire and EMS have struggled with, but we've also learned that they're not the only ones that participate in unified command. And a little known fact is that the NFPA standardizes the incident command system. It's NFPA 1561. So everyone thought it was something that came from DHS or FEMA. It actually was the NFPA and it was adapted by Congress as part of the 9/11 Act. So it's our standard that gets updated for them.

Spence

12:20

It's very interesting. Are there other standards that NFPA produces that you think would have a potential impact or effect on law enforcement?

Montes

12:28

Sure. So, aside from the incident command system, many people use the National Incident Management System, which is NIMS, right? And it's probably a grant requirement for most agencies to be NIMS compliant. NFPA 1600, that's NIMS. Surprise? How about what the respiratory protection law enforcement wears or the gloves that they wear, or the information that they are receiving about fentanyl, or other hazardous materials that they're being exposed to? A lot of the procedures that you're learning to those things may come from NIJ or NIOSH or other acronyms out there but they're rooted in NFPA standards. As a matter of fact, I'm responsible for several of them. NFPA 472 and 473 are hazardous materials and competencies. NFPA 475 is hazardous materials response.

So we are around law enforcement. We provide support to law enforcement. The things we do, law enforcement uses. They're just not aware, and that's okay. But one of the things that 3000 has done is it's opened the door to law enforcement on a national level participating in what goes in these standards. And that's a really, really vital and an important thing.

Spence

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So what has been the response to 3000 since its release?

Montes

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I would say shockingly positive. I don't often hear complaints about 3000. I hear it being used as a way to bring communities together. I hear that it's creating this impetus that we don't have a choice anymore. We have to work together. And one of the things we heard a lot when we were preparing to write 3000 back—all the way back in 2017, like it was so long ago—was we heard that it's a struggle to get certain players to the table in certain communities. And it's not always the same one. Sometimes, it's a police chief. Sometimes, it's a school superintendent. But because there's a standard now and it's an accredited standard that says, "no, we have to work together," it's creating those opportunities to have the conversations that you didn't really have before.

Actually, I had a great story recently from Houston, Texas, where they had a presentation on 3000 from a technical committee member. One of the people that helped write it. And after that, 40 different agencies had group meetings for the first time in the history of Houston, this was before the floods, talking about active shooter preparedness and response. Then they had the San Antonio incident in that county, in Harris County, and they actually used some of the things they talked about because they were working through the 3000 process in that incident.

And I just recently was speaking at an EMS conference and out of nowhere a Harris County fire marshal sticks his head on the door and goes, "That standard saved lives in Houston." And that was like the best day of my life. I almost cried. And I'm Cuban, so I get a little emotional. So it was one of those days.

Spence

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So what are the next steps for 3000 then?

Montes

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The best thing about 3000 is that it's always going to get revised. It's currently on a two-year revision cycle. So, later this month hopefully, or early next month, you're going to see a report come out with the first draft of changes from the technical committee. And that's based on inputs that we receive from the public. And then they're going to give the public a second chance to comment on these changes. The technical committee is going to meet in September of this year and make their second draft of changes, and then that's going to be the next edition of 3000.

Spence

16:01

So it's very much a living document then?

Montes

16:03

Absolutely. And we started small. When you read it, it's only 40 pages. The requirements are pretty limited and pretty grand in scope to give you lots of flexibility, but it's got room for growth. And I think you'll see things coming into 3000 in the future like unmanned aerial systems, integration of aviation, more equipment requirements, radio communications requirements, and interoperability requirements. Those things are in the hopper when you think about it. But as a country, we're not necessarily ready for them yet. You know, there's things like FirstNet and Next Generation 11 that are rolling out now. That once those things are more embedded in our communities, then 3000 will start incorporating that information.

Spence

16:44

So if the public can comment on the 3000 standard app, how would they do that?

Montes

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So they would go to the 3000 website, and on there there's tabs. So the two most important tabs to look at, actually three, the three most important tabs to look at are the one that says news. The one that says news has fact sheets that you can download and it gives it you access to an online training program, to the subscription service which is a subscription that you can have a digital copy on your phone like an e-book. But it also has a checklist and different things that the NFPA made in videos that go with 3000 separate of the committee. So that's all on the news tab.

So the Next tab is the most, is probably the most, valuable tab because on there you can see where the standard is in cycle. You can see when the committee is meeting. You can see their meeting minutes and you can see if it's open for public input or public comment. Input is first draft, comment is second draft. So as the standard goes through its cycle and after 2020, it will be every three years. It will be open for input. The committee will meet. Then it will be open for comment. Then it comes back out.

Then the third tab is the technical committee tab. And the reason that one's really important is because it's where my contact information is and it's also where you can see who's on the committee. So you can see who's representing you. And many of you are part of like a trade association like the FOP, or the ICP, or the National Sheriffs' of the major counties or major cities. So you're part of some body or some association, somebody that represents you on the committee. And that's another way you can get your input in to the standard, is reach out to your representatives and ask them to put things in or talk to them about what, why they voted the way they did. Because the other thing you can see on the Next tab that I didn't say is you can see who voted what.

Spence

18:39

So just one final but very important question. How can people get a copy of 3000?

Montes

18:45

So 3000 can be viewed for free at the NFPA website. Anyone can go create a free login and read 3000. In order to have your own copy, you can order a printed copy or you can sign up for a subscription. That gives you digital access to the standard plus some videos and some different tools that go with it that we've created at the NFPA separately of the standard. All of this can be seen at W-W-W-dot-N-F-P-A-dot-O-R-G-forward slash-N-E-W-S—www.nfpa.org/3000news.

Spence

19:22

Well, thank you very much for talking to us about NFPA 3000 today, John. It's been a pleasure.

Montes

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Thank you so much.

Voiceover: *The Beat Exit*

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Voiceover: Disclaimer

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