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Tactical Challenges in Responding to Campus Facilities

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Tactical Challenges in Responding to Campus Facilities

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Campus facilities in most cases provide many of the same tactical challenges as many of the occupancies in the community. But they also provide many other challenge or more concentrated challenges. Labs, housing both on and off campus, large assembly occupancies, research of all kinds, to name a few, may not be found in the size and quantity as the community or at all. Resent events on campuses require that emergency personnel be familiar with the entire facility. This is not just for fire events but medical, police and weather events, which are more prevalent and commonplace than fires. The responder community including fire, police and EMS need to be familiar with these occupancies and the challenges they may face on a response. Local emergency responders and the college or university should prepare for a response to the facility. Preplanning and preparation by both organizations will ensure an organized response reducing the effects of the event. NFPA 1620, Recommended Practice for Pre-Incident Planning can assist both organizations in preparing for the response.

Housing

Housing whether on or off campus provide their own challenges to response. Occupant density, lack of accountability, the buildings physical state, code violations, delayed notification all provide challenges. Unlike hotels, the density of



the occupants per room is usually greater. It is not unusual to have 2-4 occupants per room single not including suites. Sometimes these occupants can be physical impaired reducing their ability to respond if a fire occurs. Unprotected vertical opening are usually present either by original design or by being defeated by the occu-

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pants. Sometime fire protection equipment has been defeated to reduce false alarms.

- How do you access the housing area?
- Where is the access?
- Does the building have a security desk? Is it staffed 24/7?
- Do they have an accountability system?
- Are master keys available to get into every room?
- Do I have access to courtyards?
- What fire protection systems and equipment is available?

Labs

Labs and research facilities provide extra challenges in responding. Is animal research, contagious disease, medical research, MRI's, use of hazardous material being performed or used in the building? If so, beside security issues, fire or medical response may be delayed due to tasks being performed.

- Are there security measures in place?
- Can I access the area in a timely manner?
- What hazards are present? Animals, diseases, hazardous materials.
- Are hazardous areas clearly marked?
- Do you know how to handle the hazards?
- Will staff be present 24/7 to respond to an emergency?
- How will you ventilate, or can you ventilate?
- What fire protection systems and equipment is available?
- Can you use water? What agents can be used?
- Do you know shutdown procedures?

Assembly Occupancies

Libraries have spaces provided for small groups or single study rooms. Student can be sleeping in these areas at any time of day. Numerous assembly spaces used for classes and functions are located in most

buildings. Are they protected appropriately for their use? What are their uses is the assembly room now an exhibit hall?

- What are the locations of study rooms?
- Are current assembly occupancies used for other than their normal use?
- Are special permits required for certain activities? Does the fire department get a copy?
- What is the parking like around the building, do you have access during events?
- Are you familiar with the building and fire protection systems?

Classrooms

Classrooms range in size from very small to large lecture halls. There may also be classroom located in other buildings not normally used for classes. Classes or meeting may be held at other than normal times or for other purposes.

- Are classrooms open 24/7 for student use?
- How do gain access to the building during and after hours?
- What fire protection systems and equipment is available?
- Any special security measures?

Does the facility have a mass notification system used campus wide? Do you have a procedure on how to use the system or get a message sent? Do you have certain messages already to be used with only minor changes such as location, where to go, what to do?

No matter what the size, number of buildings, building use, and other factors in the university or college setting it is important that local emergency responders be familiar with the facility. Being prepared prior to the emergency will minimize the consequences of the event if it takes place.



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