

are testing their knowledge of protocols and personal protective equipment via a new online 3D game, modestly called the "To Hell and Back III: Firefighter Interactive Simulator" (THAB for short). Players use residential, vehicle, and dumpster fire scenarios to make choices based on standard operating guidelines. Volunteer firefighters are especially at risk for burn injuries.

Shaking Up Civilians

A recent earthquake drill exercised 300 National Guard troops from multiple states, plus more than 500 state, local, and federal first responders. But it wasn't in California – the site was Beaufort County, South Carolina. It was the first time a "Vigilant Guard" exercise was held in a civilian area.

"Rapid medical evaluation, on the spot first aid, superior radio operations capabilities, and a top-grade procedure for extracting the wounded and decontaminating patients are some of the key skills needed to perform a successful operation of this scope," says retired Army medic Ken Hall, who conducts decontamination system training for DHS Technologies, makers of DRASH shelters.

Training includes everything from security at the site or facility, how many individuals it takes to run the system, how to properly wear personnel protective clothing, disposing of the patients' contaminated clothing, decontaminating ambulatory and litter patients, getting the patients from the 'hot zone' to the 'clean zone,' and how to remove personnel protective clothing and decontaminate the personnel working the system.

Hostile Takeover

Environmental Tectonics Corporation has delivered a high school hostage takeover scenario to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Counterterrorism Task Force. The open-ended simulation features a virtual six-classroom building in which armed terrorists have taken more than 100 students, teachers and administrators hostage. Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) responders must act to mitigate the situation and minimize casualties.

Instructors have the option to customize exercises on the fly. Hostages and hostage-takers can be controlled by instructors or by the simulator's artificial intelligence engine.

"This important training capability has been at the forefront of concerns about security in our schools for several years," says Marco van Wijngaarden, president of ETC's Advanced Disaster Management Simulator (ADMS) unit. He believes the scenario can be easily adapted to other potential hostage venues such as banks, casinos, stadiums, cruise ships, and airports.

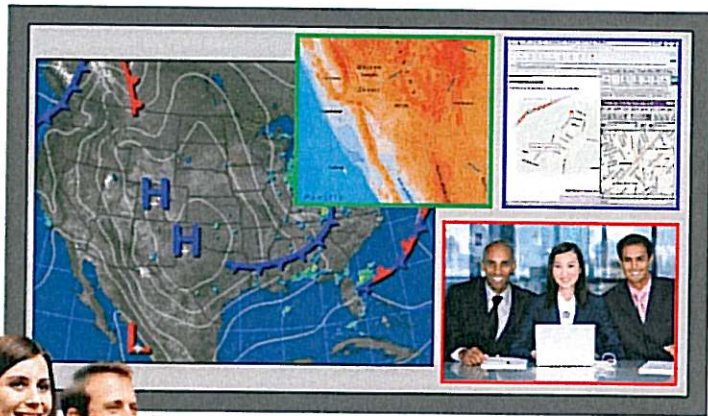
Professor Av A. Tar

The next "classroom of the future" for the Department of Homeland Security will be a secure 'social network' program incorporating "avatar-based instructional delivery." Contractor for the \$800,000 project is Engineering & Computer Simulations.

Students and instructors will collaborate in a 3D virtual environment with integrated Voice over IP and text chat to implement training and mission rehearsal for disaster response.

The DHS classroom will also eventually be integrated into the virtual world ECS is developing for the National Guard Joint State Response Training System's Emergency Management Nexus (EM-Nexus). **ms&t**

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