



FEMA

Resilience
National Preparedness Directorate
National Training and Education Division

Training Partners Program

TPP Times

The Future is Now

Welcome to the Fall 2020 issue of the *TPP Times*! In this issue, we're continuing to share how our partners are working with technology to offer training while dealing with coronavirus (COVID-19).

These organizations are using some of the more popular learning management systems, conferencing tools and, most importantly, new and modified strategies to address the needs of both students (to learn more efficiently) and instructors (to teach more effectively).

Organizations like the Mid-Atlantic Center for Emergency Management, Louisiana State University's National Center for Biomedical Research and Training, the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium, the National Nuclear Security Administration's Counterterrorism Operations Support and our very own NTED staff have developed new ways of offering their training and have learned some valuable best practices that we're excited to share with you.

And as always, we share timely best practices on 508 compliance measures in the "Section 508 Quarterly."

We welcome your input on the *TPP Times*, including comments, questions and information you want to share with other Training Partners. Email us at TPPTimes@fema.dhs.gov.

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Training During a Pandemic

Quick best practices for getting the most out of your virtual training

By Dalia Abdelmeguid, ISD Specialist, FEMA National Training and Education Division

Has your supervisor asked you to conduct all your face-to-face training virtually? Are you facing challenges leading interactive training online? As we are currently fighting the global COVID-19 pandemic, the desire for virtual training is growing. Running virtual training takes a specific set of skills and might involve more planning than traditional instructor-led training. This article will highlight some best practices for facilitating synchronous training online.

Communicate your expectations

Remember that a virtual classroom starts once you receive a list of your participants. Send a welcome message to all participants before the training begins and ask them what their expectations are from this training. Collecting information from participants in advance will help you tailor your materials to their needs and prepare appropriate questions. Also, it will help you build rapport with your participants before the training even starts. Send another message one day before the training and let participants know that they should eliminate any sources of distraction, such as emails, instant messaging and background noise. Finally, make them aware that their active participation is necessary to get the most out of the session.



Be prepared

Just as you would arrange desks or tables in instructor-led training, take the time to set up your virtual classroom. Before conducting your training, make sure that you are familiar with the features of the platform you are using. Conduct a dry run and ensure you understand what

every menu command means, what each button does and how to troubleshoot any issues that may arise. Run through all elements of your presentation to build your confidence in using the platform with the content you created. Finally, learn how the platform works from both a host view and a participant view.

Engage your audience

Remember that as a facilitator, you cannot see all your participants at once. Use your platform tools to keep them engaged. Together, let us explore the uses of some of the most common tools available on most collaborative virtual meeting/training platforms.

Chat: Chat is one of the most familiar tools in virtual classrooms. It is the easiest way to encourage interaction among participants. You can use the chat option to encourage participants who tend to be shy about speaking up during a discussion.

Polls: You can use the poll option to create an interactive online environment. For instance, after every block of instruction, give a pop quiz to determine how well your participants understood the topic you were presenting. You can also run an informal poll to determine whether the session's pace is working well for everyone. When presenting a case study, you can involve your participants in the story using polls. You can ask them what they would do in a given situation and give them multiple options.

Whiteboard: A virtual whiteboard is very similar to a real whiteboard. You can use it to record participants' comments, emphasize important points and write exercise instructions. For example, at the beginning of your session, you can ask participants to share their expectations, write down those expectations on the whiteboard and revisit the same board at the end of the session to check whether those expectations were met. You can promote interaction in your virtual training by

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...the purpose of any tool is to support the learning process, not supplant it.

-MACEM&PS



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calling on participants to write their ideas or conclusions on it. This will make your training more visually engaging and will help maintain participants' attention.

Break-out rooms: Breakout rooms allow groups of two or more participants to meet and collaborate during a synchronous online training. You can propose a problem, assign two or more participants to breakout rooms, discuss it and come up with solutions. Similarly, you can ask them to analyze a case study or facilitate small group discussions. You might even use two tools by, for example, asking participants to discuss a topic in a breakout room and report on the whiteboard for real-time collaboration.

There are many ways to successfully conduct virtual training. This may be the standard for the near future as our nation (and the world) confronts the COVID-19 pandemic. Although a single article cannot address all of the virtual training pitfalls you may face, these best practices are a good starting point to engaging virtual training participants, understanding available tools for instructors and being prepared to offer the best training possible.

What tips do you have for offering virtual training?
Send your tips to tpptimes@fema.dhs.gov.



For more information about the Coronavirus Disease go to [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Stay Focused: Don't Let Technology Sidetrack You from the Basics

From the Mid-Atlantic Center for Emergency Management & Public Safety

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has truly been a shock to our system, from how we interact with each other to how we do our job as trainers, facilitators and learners. We've had to adapt—on the fly—to a new training environment that has fundamentally changed how we train and learn for the foreseeable future. As educators, it's always important to understand and evaluate all methods available to improve what we do. But as deadlines loom and the pace of change continues, keeping up with the flurry of options can begin to distract from the goal. At day's end, the purpose of any educational tool (method or technology, pandemic-inspired or not) is to support the learning process, not supplant it.

Focus on the learner

This is important because it is what training developers have always known—the importance of focusing on the learner—but sometimes it bears repeating. At the Mid-Atlantic Center for Emergency Management and Public Safety (MACEM&PS), we are reminding all our designers and instructors to focus on the learning process itself—and the principles that form its foundation. The learner is (and should always be) the starting point:

- Who are they?
- Why are they here?
- What do they need?
- What knowledge do we want them to have?
- What should they be able to accomplish with it?

These questions are familiar. Answering them may help bring focus to the blur of technology options. Our goal is not to chase the perfect tool. Our goal is to choose a tool that will let us accomplish our training mission, and by extension, help our learners achieve their goal(s).

Understandably, the current environment sees many training and educational organizations struggling to implement unfamiliar methods and technology. For some, this comes in the form of going virtual to courses and institutional systems that might not be prepared for such an abrupt quantum leap. For others, it manifests as the uniquely unusual challenge of determining arrangements for a remote classroom, equipping it with personal protective equipment and then, of course, teaching effectively in it. Neither case is easy—every problem is a vacuum that infinite solutions can be invented to fill. The consequences are significant, and the array of considerations can be dizzying but staying focused on the basics can help.

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Don't forget what you already know

We've found that keeping to the core rhythm of learning is key. For developing a new program, we try to first set aside the questions of the training environment. Instead, we focus on familiar basics:

- Establishing outcomes
- Defining objectives
- Refining them into expected competencies
- Selecting appropriate deliverables and assessments to be sure the job is done

Then, we review each item against the realities we face and the tools we have available. Is there something in the ever-updating arsenal to accomplish each item? If yes, excellent. If not, we consider how to find one, or how to adapt the item to what we can do. This smooths the design process into a series of discrete challenges, rather than a holistically overwhelming problem.

If this method sounds familiar, that is because it is: It is the same process we already use to develop courses in any format, and it is the iterative heart of FEMA's ADDIE (Analyze-Design-Develop-Implement-Evaluate) model for training quality assurance.

This is precisely the point: The pace of change and challenge may be increasing, but at any speed, we travel on ground we already know. Even as we innovate training for pandemic safety, others have gone before us—both Spanish Flu and Polio outbreaks interrupted school years and shifted classroom modalities. The latter even saw new technology (television and radio) employed to keep teaching possible. We can't forget where we came from if we expect to provide the best training to future learners.

The future is now

The MACEM&PS is trying to bridge the gap between past knowledge and current needs. Our academic programs are entirely online this semester but we are preparing all our training and education programs to be delivered both in-person and online—to be ready for anything. It is complicated, but we are building on a variety of modalities and tools we have developed in less urgent times and measuring anything new against the standards of proven learning theory and methodology. The end result may look a bit different, but it still needs to promote learning and result in students obtaining their desired outcomes. That metric is as comfortingly familiar as it gets.

As a training and educational organization, we have often embraced technology at a pace we have found comfortable. We are now forced to move faster, but the principles guiding us, and the ground we have gained, are the same as ever. So, while you look for or adapt to a new training technology, tool, or system, ask yourself:

Will that tool being considered—however fancy or uncomfortably new or likely to be one-upped by the next big thing—help students meet their goals? Is your program, regardless of where you end up having to deliver it, going to enable learning?

Embrace or discard your answers to those questions

accordingly. Then repeat as needed.

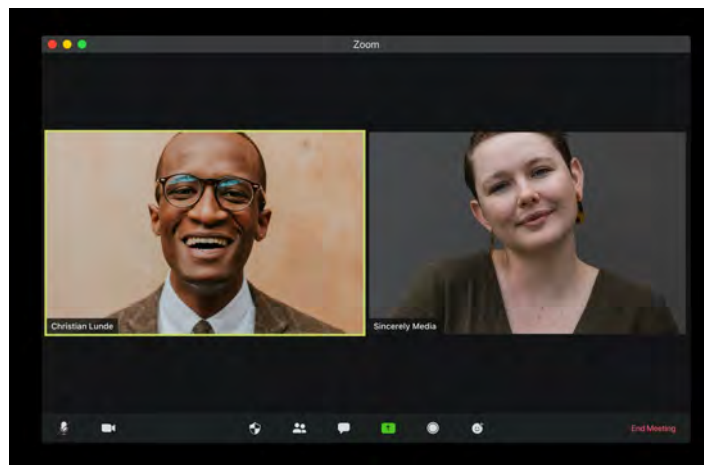
And to help, here is the learning management and development process guiding the MACEM&PS's choices as we navigate the unusual. Consider these and use them if they will help you focus on achieving your training goals.

Remember, the outcome is more important than the means.

MACEM&PS Guidelines for Learning Management and Development

For any course, whether brand new or existing and being adapted to a new delivery environment:

- Start planning by developing/reviewing intended learner outcomes and understanding learner characteristics.
- Refine your intended outcomes into a set of competencies.
- Determine assessments/deliverables that will effectively measure these competencies.
- Review and select a technology that is appropriate for the environment. The technology should serve you, not the other way around.
- Evaluate the methodology you choose on an ongoing basis.
- Monitor new technologies to find potential improvements. Do not make the new the enemy of the effective; but do provide your students the best tool you are confident will do the job.
- Develop courses with multiple environments in mind. Prioritizing upfront time and investing creatively to build adaptability will result in better, more resilient courses overall.



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First Responder Training During a Global Pandemic: Providing Resources in Unprecedented Times

By Louisiana State University's National Center for Biomedical Research and Training/Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education (LSU NCBRT/ACE)

The COVID-19 global pandemic has caused unprecedented operational difficulties for emergency response agencies. One such critical challenge is training, specifically the inability to conduct traditional in-person training for large groups. The question is, how do agencies provide their personnel with necessary training without compromising public safety?

Louisiana State University's (LSU) National Center for Biomedical Research and Training/Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education has been able to adapt multiple trainings that address biological incidents, community healthcare and COVID-19 preparedness and response. The agency has developed training and technical assistance programs that provide emergency management and response professionals with the knowledge to prevent, plan, prepare for and respond to the pandemic, while maintaining distance with less personal contact. As a result, emergency preparedness agencies are utilizing LSU NCBRT/ACE training information in a variety of ways that work best for them in response to COVID-19.

Making training available—Now

Police, fire and law enforcement personnel across multiple states have been able to access valuable LSU NCBRT/ACE resources to implement extra precautions to combat the spread of the virus and prevent infections using videos, podcasts, webinars and courses taught via Zoom and other online methods.

LSU NCBRT, along with a team of expert instructors, has already provided training in these new ways and has transitioned several courses to the Zoom format with success.

In August, LSU NCBRT hosted open, virtual classes for Site Protection Through Observational Techniques-Customized (SPOT-C). This course generated overwhelmingly positive feedback from students. Individuals from all over the country, representing areas from Alaska to Florida, participated. Numerous courses are now scheduled and there are strong registration numbers through the end of 2020.

Law Enforcement Prevention & Deterrence of Terrorist Acts-Customized (P&D-C) was also launched in August and those courses have now been scheduled through December.

Training across the Nation

Several videos produced by the LSU NCBRT team have been highly popular among thousands of viewers. An excellent example is the COVID-19 Roll Call Training video which addresses officer safety during the COVID-19 outbreak. The training video and job aid provide information on how officers can keep themselves safe before, during and after contact with others in the course of their job. It also addresses steps officers can take at the end of a shift in order to return home safely.

The Roll Call training has already been adopted by many

agencies across the U.S. and has proven to be a vital tool in combatting the coronavirus. To date, approximately 500,000 individuals from 49 states and two U.S. territories have requested or accessed this training.

In New Jersey, Chief Andrew Davis with the Clayton Police Department issued eye protection to all officers after viewing the Roll Call for Law Enforcement video. Also, in New Jersey, Longport Police Department Chief Frank Culmone made the Roll Call for LE video part of bi-annual training and will start to implement the webinar and job aid into the in-service training rotation.

"Your video and training guide were most helpful at a critical time and I shared my experience with other state chiefs," Culmone said. "I know that you must have gotten flooded with requests after that. Thank you for being on the front lines with us and through this."

Another example, the *CDC Sequence for Donning and Doffing PPE* video, walks viewers step-by-step through the guidelines prescribed by the CDC for donning and doffing a gown, mask/respirator, face shield and gloves.

The video includes tips and information on how to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when in the vicinity of infected patients or potentially infected material or surfaces. It also provides instructions on appropriately discarding PPE after use.

Hawaii State Hospital staff is now incorporating the LSU NCBRT Donning/Doffing Training Video when preparing for COVID-19 patients. The hospital is implementing procedures in the training video in an effort to prepare hospital staff for interactions with suspected COVID-19 patients, as well as reinforce proper protocols before and after caring for infected patients.

"I loved the training video on preparing before and after care of COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19 patients," said Kathleen Acierto, a registered nurse with Hawaii State Hospital. "The length of the video was perfect and it hit on excellent points which would be helpful for our staff."

In Texas, the training video is being utilized by the Texas Children's Hospital to train 100 personnel on their critical care and transport teams. This is an important effort to refresh and reinforce employee training on how to properly use PPE during the coronavirus pandemic.

"As a hospital and transport team, we utilize [NCBRT's] wonderful information to make sure we are not missing something and, if so, be able to change it," Karen Morales, education coordinator for the Intensive Care Transport Team, stated. "Currently, the information has been a wonderful reinforcement and very educational."

Broad training options work

Each week, the LSU NCBRT Preparedness Podcast brings some of the nation's top experts to cover different aspects of COVID-19 relating to public health and public safety. Experts discuss numerous topics including:

- How the COVID-19 crisis has impacted the food industry

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- COVID-19 testing and contact tracing
- The different kinds of COVID-19 tests
- Lab processes for handling and analyzing different tests
- The necessity of testing and contact tracing to ensure the highest levels of public safety.

The podcasts also cover responder resiliency and mental health and the pandemic’s effects on homeless populations.

LSU NCBRT has also created specialized webinars that can be accessed for training purposes. The *Demobilization in a Pandemic* webinar, for example, helps individuals understand demobilization plans and procedures for jurisdictions, agencies and departments under federal guidance during a pandemic. This webinar explains the importance of plans, procedures and documentation during a major public health disaster such as a pandemic and how that affects the U.S. response at the federal, tribal, state, territorial and local levels.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, LSU NCBRT has created videos and resources to bring specialized training to a wide audience at no cost to participants. To date, approximately 7,347 agencies from almost every state in the U.S. have accessed or requested these training resources. Despite the ongoing challenges of conducting trainings in the present environment, LSU NCBRT leaders found that these alternate methods have been extremely effective in providing participants with a professional experience that can help prepare them for the challenges of current and future situations.

“While we specialize in law enforcement training and bio-chem terrorist threats, the team here at LSU NCBRT/ACE wanted to get immediate training and educational information to our first responder community as fast as possible to keep our nation safe,” LSU NCBRT/ACE Executive Director Jeff Mayne said. “We support our first responders and will continue to ensure they are equipped with the best knowledge and training to protect them and our nation’s population regardless of the threat we face.”

About LSU NCBRT/ACE

LSU NCBRT/ACE is a nationally recognized center for emergency preparedness and response training located at Louisiana State University’s flagship campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. We provide mobile training to both the national and international emergency response community. LSU NCBRT/ACE has expertise in research, development and delivery of training in the areas of specialized law enforcement operations; biological incident response; food and agriculture safety and security; school safety; and instructional design and technique.



Did you know?

Researchers have studied strategies for increasing learner engagement in virtual training environments. Following are some facilitation techniques that may be effective in increasing learner engagement:

- Incorporate interactions between instructor and learners, between learner and learner and between learner and course content.
- Build the cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence of the instructor.
- Include exercises and assignments that are relevant to learner’s work and lives.

Share Your Success!

Do you have a training or learning success story?
Share it with the *TPP Times* audience!

Tell us about it and we may include it a future issue. Contact us at:
TPPTimes@fema.dhs.gov



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Interaction between the instructor and participants promoted valuable discussion ...

-Ray Hagen



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Training Innovation Overcomes Obstacles: RDPC Delivers Virtual Training Solutions Amidst the Coronavirus Crisis

By Ray Hagen, Marketing Associate, Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium

The global pandemic of 2020 has posed numerous challenges to the emergency responder training community. As the coronavirus crisis progresses, the need for all-hazards preparedness continues. Instructor-led training opportunities have diminished due to the inherent challenges associated with social distancing. To overcome these obstacles, the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium (RDPC) has developed and implemented innovative, virtual, instructor-led training solutions for small, rural and tribal jurisdictions utilizing the Zoom for Government training platform.

Training here, there and anywhere

This leading-edge technology offers a secure, sophisticated, encrypted environment so that emergency responders can "learn virtually anywhere." Each virtual delivery is an 8-hour course that is presented over two consecutive days. Each day consists of one 4-hour training session in which participants engage with a live instructor.

These virtual deliveries cover a variety of relevant all-hazards training topics to include the following:

- AWR 144-V: Port and Vessel Security for Public Safety and Maritime Personnel
- AWR 148-V: Crisis Management for School-Based Incidents- Partnering Rural Law Enforcement, First Responders and Local School Systems
- MGT 232-V: Mass Fatalities Planning and Response for Rural Communities
- MGT 381-V: Continuity of Business Planning
- MGT 403-V: Access and Functional Needs Preparedness Planning for Rural Communities
- MGT 416-V: Introduction to Continuity of Government Planning for Rural Jurisdictions
- MGT 433-V: Isolation and Quarantine for Rural Communities

After months of planning and preparation, the RDPC—along with academic member University of Findlay's All Hazards Training Center—conducted the first two Zoom deliveries during the last week of July. They delivered AWR 148-V Crisis Management for School-Based Incidents-Partnering Rural Law Enforcement, First Responders and Local School Systems course. A total of 51 students participated in and completed the deliveries that were held in the West Plains, Missouri and Bedford, Kentucky jurisdictions.

Student engagement is key

Students in attendance represented diverse professional backgrounds including that of law enforcement, school system administrators, fire service professionals and emergency medical services professionals. In the virtual training environment, students engaged with instructor Scott Lowry by asking and answering questions, participating in polls and collaborating in group chat sessions. Scott's expertise as a law enforcement professional, accompanied by a passion to educate others, provided participants with invaluable insight into school-based incident preparedness.

Interaction between the instructor and participants promoted valuable discussion regarding course content and past experiences. There were many comments on the evaluation form reflecting the benefit of virtual classroom interaction. For example, in response to the evaluation question regarding the part of the course that was most valuable, one participant commented: *"Local interaction with other students, even virtually through chat."* Another participant added: *"Module 3 gave a lot of information and tools (about) threat assessments that I didn't know about."*

During the global pandemic, participant safety is paramount in delivering all-hazards training to emergency responders.

"The benefits of virtual deliveries include no travel required and allow folks to interact safely, with no concerns of COVID-19 exposure," said Laura Hoehne, Project Manager for the All-Hazards Training Center at The University of Findlay. "Although we look forward to the time when we can resume face-to-face deliveries, we are excited [to offer] valuable RPDC training using the Zoom platform."

Continuation of all-hazards training is paramount when ensuring our nation's emergency responders are adequately prepared.

"We are dedicated to continuing training under the most difficult of circumstances," said Julie Wilson, director of the RDPC.

When faced with the challenges of the global pandemic, the RDPC responded by providing innovative training solutions for our nation's emergency responder community.

Feedback can be fun

Countless hours of behind-the-scenes development and testing took place to ensure these virtual training deliveries would be successful. Everything had to be evaluated and examined, including course content, the registration process and communication between the consortium and participants.

The process presented many new challenges but proved worthwhile and rewarding. There were lessons learned, as well as welcomed surprises during the virtual deliveries that will help guide future processes.

Following the virtual deliveries, the RDPC received positive, encouraging participant feedback. One participant said *"This* (Continued on page 7)

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is a GREAT ZOOM class. More classes need to be held like this. Just because the pandemic is around, doesn't mean people don't have time to train. We are sitting around and wringing our hands thinking, we are behind based on training. This is the PERFECT time to be doing more and more of this. Especially since folks can't travel and have had issues traveling for a couple of years. More classes need to be done by Zoom!"

Another participant expressed gratitude to the consortium for offering unique training solutions during the pandemic. "This was my first virtual class and I really enjoyed it. It makes it easier to participate, not having to travel back and forth to physical locations. It is a busy time in the emergency management world and this allows me to still be able to participate in classes without being removed from our EOC during an activation. I was worried about student-student interactions being lost but having the chat option actually made it easier to interact without disrupting the flow of the class. People are less reluctant to communicate through chat vs. in person in front of a class. Great job!"

Overall, these virtual deliveries proved overwhelmingly successful and enjoyable. The RDPC plans to implement and deliver more Zoom-based training opportunities to small, rural and tribal jurisdictions across the U.S. in the future.

To learn more about these and other RDPC courses, visit www.ruraltraining.org. There, you will find helpful course information, as well as registration links for upcoming courses.

About the Center for Rural Development

The Center for Rural Development (CRD) serves as Executive Agent for the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium (RDPC). Led by the CRD, the RDPC is a national consortium comprised of six academic members who have demonstrated the ability to develop and deliver U.S. Department of Homeland Security-certified training courses nationwide. Each academic member provides expertise and niche capabilities in delivering tuition-free training to small, rural and tribal jurisdictions. These academic members include the following:

- Eastern Kentucky University
- North Carolina Central University
- Northwest Arkansas Community College
- The University of California, Davis
- The University of Findlay
- The University of Tennessee (affiliate)

Training delivered by the consortium unites members of multi-jurisdictional agencies, including federal, state, local, tribal and territorial, as well as the private sector to help support the U.S. before, during and after disasters. RDPC provides participants in small, rural and tribal areas with the knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance the safety, security and quality of life for their citizens.

Since its inception in January of 2005, The RDPC has trained more than 108,000 students, offering 23 live, instructor-led courses, five web-based courses and seven Zoom-based virtual, instructor-led courses. The RDPC remains committed to helping our nation's emergency responders to "prepare for

the worst and train to be the best."



The Search for a Great Learning Management System

By Rob Ryan, Operations Manager, Counterterrorism Operations Support

This year, the Counterterrorism Operations Support (CTOS) Center for Radiological/Nuclear Training is looking to upgrade its cloud-based learning management system (LMS). While the CTOS selection process is still ongoing, it will be beneficial to share the five most sought-after characteristics in a new learning management system. These characteristics are key components in ensuring the learning system is compliant, efficient, and effective for training partners across the country.

Security compliance

Any selected third-party LMS service provided needs to comply with FedRAMP security requirements. Fedramp.gov provides the following definition:

"The Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) is a government-wide program that provides a standardized approach to security assessment, authorization, and continuous monitoring for cloud products and services."

Any non-Federal Government entity that wants to host or process Federal Government data must meet their requirements in order to do business with the Federal Government. Whoever provides in-house IT support should be able to help navigate these requirements. Many commercial LMS vendors do not bother to meet FedRAMP certifications due to the expense of doing so—and perhaps a lack of significant Federal-related contract work to make it worthwhile for their business.

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“As a federal contractor we’re focused on finding a learning management system that not only provides us with an overarching, holistic tool, but that meets these important federal compliance mandates,” said Dave Pasquale, system search coordinator. “From security to 508 compliance, the system must be robust and ready to serve our customers at the federal, state, and local levels.”

Section 508 compliance

The second characteristic you should look for in an LMS is the ability of the LMS to host web-based training content that is Section 508 compliant. Section 508 requires that all Federal Agencies make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. For example, a blind or deaf person should also be able to take a properly prepared and hosted online course. Though there is an initial time cost to getting course content up to compliance, it is well worth the effort. With that compliance comes the sense of knowing your courses are available to the broadest number of first responders, emergency managers, and senior leaders.



Funding models

The third characteristic is a flexible funding model. Most LMS are setup up to support a corporate model that involves a fixed number of employees taking multiple courses over a year. These courses include annual employee safety training, diversity training, or any number of common classes that must be taught on a repetitive basis. Most funding models are driven by the total number of employees using the service with the number of classes per employee not being a significant factor. CTOS has the exact opposite situation—there are a large number of potential students (in the tens of thousands each year), but with many only taking one or two courses over the year period, and then maybe never again. The LMS provider must be flexible enough to allow for many students taking a low number of individual annual courses.

Recordkeeping

The fourth characteristic is the student record keeping capability. The total number of individual student records needs to scale as capacity grows and the ability to add user-defined data fields needs to be present. An old Rolodex that does not capture email addresses and mobile phone numbers has diminishing utility as technology evolves. Students need the ability to access records and retrieve digital copies of class certifications. The data needs to be exportable to the FEMA National Training and Education Division Registration and Evaluation System database as well. The ability to digitize all the associated course data is also highly desirable. No one wants to keep track of reams of paper or paper-scanned pre-

and post-test scores.

“The importance of expandability and customizability can’t be overstated,” added Pasquale. “Regardless of the stage of training, from scheduling, testing, archiving, or tracking students and instructors, the learning management system must be able to handle the task—and provide great analytical tools to ensure we’re on track.”

Because of the unique nature of CTOS training (i.e., there may be many years between course completions), keeping track of students’ training certifications even after they have moved on from one organization to another is vital. Their skill set(s) may become necessary during an exercise or real-world event and knowing who is certified and their ability to assist should be a part of the LMS archival system.

Automation

The fifth characteristic is the ability to utilize the LMS in real time to automate instructor-led training. The student should be able to pre-register online for a class or register as a walk-in electronically on their own digital device of choice (phone, laptop, and tablet). The online LMS should be able to deliver pre-and post-tests, support knowledge checks through digital polling (to increase student engagement and participation) and conduct student assessments. The LMS should provide the instructor with instant pass/fail feedback upon student test completion.

“We’re dedicated to providing the best, most realistic training possible and having the best learning management system will help us do that,” added Pasquale. A good system builds confidence in both our instructors and our students.”

Simply put, the key characteristics of an effective learning management system—compliance, proper funding model, good recordkeeping, and efficient automation—will make any training organization’s job that much easier. That increased efficiency and effectiveness will translate to providing students with engaging training content and high-quality support, so they know the courses are being conducted professionally, securely and with their success in mind.

What are some other characteristics of an effective learning management system?

Send your thoughts to:

tpptimes@fema.dhs.gov

NTED is proud to work with the following partners highlighted in this edition of the TPP Times:



Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium



Mid-Atlantic Center for Emergency Management & Public Safety



Louisiana State University's National Center for Biomedical Research and Training



National Nuclear Security Administration's Counterterrorism Operations Support

Want the latest? Get weekly news and updates

The Higher Education Program publishes a bi-weekly newsletter covering a wide variety of topics and updates from the Higher Education program. The current issue, as well as an archive of past issues, is available online at the [FEMA Emergency Management Education Newsletter Archive](#).

NIMS/ICS Training News & Notes

From the Editors

On March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national emergency pursuant to Sec. 501(b) of the Stafford Act so governors would not need to make individual emergency declarations. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories have been approved for major disaster declarations to assist with additional needs identified under the nationwide emergency declaration for COVID-19.

Additionally, 32 tribes are working directly with FEMA under the emergency declaration. So, for the first time in our Nation's history, nearly every federal agency, as well as every state, local, territorial, and tribal nation has utilized the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) to help them manage their response to this crisis.

Fortunately, since FY 2006, federal funding for state, local and tribal preparedness grants has been tied to compliance with the NIMS. Undoubtedly, this has helped us as a Nation be better prepared to handle this monumental national emergency.

Due to the pandemic, many in-person training sessions at all levels of government have been suspended. However, it is essential to note that FEMA does offer several online NIMS courses that are available to the public at no cost.

ICS and NIMS Courses

- [ICS-100: Introduction to the Incident Command System](#)
- [ICS-200: ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents](#)
- [IS-700: National Incident Management System, An Introduction](#)
- [IS-701: NIMS Multiagency Coordination System \(MACS\)](#)
- [IS-29a: NIMS Public Information Officer Awareness](#)
- [IS-703b: NIMS Resource Management](#)
- [IS-706: NIMS Intrastate Mutual Aid – An Introduction](#)
- [IS-800d: National Response Framework, An Introduction](#)

FEMA has developed virtual training versions of [ICS-300: Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents](#) and [ICS-400: Advanced ICS for Command and General Staff](#) courses. These courses will be offered by individual federal agencies, and by state, local, territorial, and tribal nation government agencies.

NIMS Alerts

From the Editors

NIMS Alerts provide important information on new NIMS guidance, tools and other resources. Since the Summer 2020 issue of The *TPP Times*, FEMA's National Integration Center released the following:

- NIMS Alert 29-20: FEMA Offers Comment Period on Public Works Resource Types
- NIMS Alert 28-20: FEMA Releases E/L0969, NIMS ICS All-Hazards Communication Unit Leader (COML) Course
- NIMS Alert 26-20: National Engagement Period: NIMS Resource Typing Definitions: Emergency Medical Services
- NIMS Alert 25-20: FEMA Releases NIMS Job Titles/ Position Qualifications and Resource Typing Definitions: Urban Search and Rescue (US&R)
- NIMS Alert 24-20: FEMA Releases COVID-19 Supplement to Planning Consideration: Evacuations and Shelter-in-Place
- NIMS ALERT 19-20: Final Publication of National Incident Management Documents: Post-Disaster Building and Post-Disaster Complex

NTED Course Updates: New, Revised, Recertified and Retired

From the Editors

New

- AWR-324: Biological Incident Awareness: Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), LSU-NCBRT/ACE (certified July 1, 2020)
- AWR-379: Coastal Hazards Awareness, UH-NDPTC (certified June 2020)
- PER-378: Coastal Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment Tools, UH-NDPTC (certified August 2020)

Recertified

- None

Revised or Retired

- None

Fall 2020 Calendar of Events

- **October 19-22: 22nd Annual Food Safety Summit**, Rosemont, IL
- **November 2-4: 13th Annual Homeland Defense/Security Education Summit 2020**, "Leading and Educating in a Multi-Threat, Multi-Hazard Environment: What Homeland Security Leaders Need to Know" (virtual event)
- **November 2-6: Wildland-Urban Interface 2020**, Reno, NV
- **November 16-18: IAEM Reimagined 2020**, 68th Annual Conference of the International Association of Emergency Managers (virtual event)
- **December 1-3: National Healthcare Coalition Preparedness Conference**, "2020 Vision: Coalitions Focused on the Future, Empowered by the Past," Las Vegas, NV

The Importance of Color Contrast Testing

From the Editors

Color contrast errors are among the most common types of errors found in Section 508 testing. Despite being one of the easiest errors to remediate, they're found in documents and websites of all types from all types of authors. Unlike many other types of accessibility errors, automatic testing can be unreliable for color contrast issues, which may be why they're so prevalent. Before continuing, it may be helpful to review the color contrast standards and why they're important.

Standards

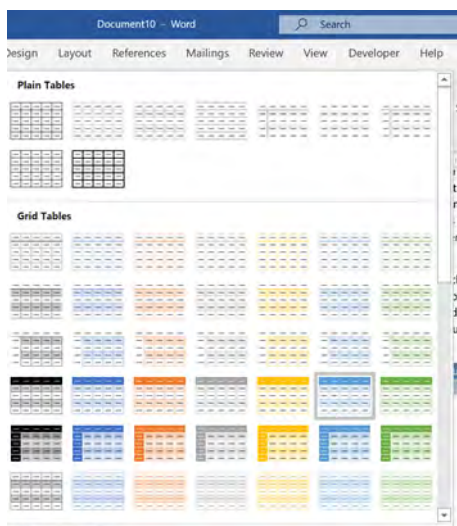
Put simply, standards for color contrast ensure that text has sufficient contrast against whatever is behind it and is therefore legible for readers with visual impairments. The contrast is expressed as a ratio of the text's luminance to the luminance of the background (luminance being the measure of brightness). For example, the text you're reading right now is pure black (#000000) against pure white (#FFFFFF) with a contrast ratio of 21.0 to 1 (or 21.0:1, to write it mathematically).

The standards for accessibility require that text have a contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for regular text and 3:1 for large text (defined as text that is 18pt or larger, or bold text that's 14pt or larger). The rationale for these ratios and font sizes is, frankly, complicated. Fortunately, following the standard doesn't require an understanding of the science that underpins it. It's enough for our purposes to know that text has to meet that standard to be sufficiently legible for accessibility.

Testing contrast

We've already mentioned that automatic testing for color contrast can be unreliable, so accurate results require manual testing, though that testing is less difficult than it sounds. There are several utilities that can perform color contrast testing, but the best known is the one made by the Paciello Group. Freely available, their [Colour Contrast Analyser](#) gives you results with just a few clicks. This is an invaluable tool, and one that should be used throughout development—really anytime you're using text that isn't black-on-white.

In fact, the reason that frequent testing is encouraged is that many pre-set themes in Microsoft Office don't pass the test. For example, let's say that you wanted to introduce a table into a document. Using Word's built in table tools, you add the table then use the Table Styles to give it some color so it's not just black and white (see below).



Depending on your particular presets, you could easily end up with something like this:

Column One	Column Two
Cell One	Cell Two

Now, as a reader without impaired vision, that might look just fine and may not be given a second thought. However, when tested, the text in the table's header row—the one styled with a pre-set color scheme—has a contrast ratio of 3.0:1, well below where it should be (see below).



Quick rules to remember

The goal of this example isn't to criticize Microsoft, but rather to illustrate how easy it can be to inadvertently introduce errors using built-in style settings. It's also not to suggest that color shouldn't be used. This table could be quickly and easily made compliant by either changing the white text to black (giving us a contrast ratio of 7.1:1) or using a darker shade of blue in the header.

White text is almost always the reason for color contrast errors, so my suggestion would be to always test any white text you use that isn't pure white-on-black. Though remember, this standard only applies to meaningful text, so there are some exceptions. Incidental text (for example, a sign that happens to be in a photograph) is not included, nor is text that:

- Is decorative
- Doesn't convey information
- Is part of an inactive element

The standard does apply to meaningful text within images or photographs. Color contrast errors are common, but they are also easily avoidable, so remember to test your text!

Did you know?

Strategies that have been found to be effective in increasing connections during online learning include:

- Learner and instructor profile pictures
- Asking students to provide introductory videos
- One-on-one communications including phone calls and audio/video feedback
- Detailed written feedback including one-on-one emails
- Instructors use of stories, emoticons, figurative language and expressing agreement
- Instructor participation in collaborative work
- Audio feedback from instructor
- Open access to peers' projects

REMEMBER:



Questions, comments or story ideas
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www.firstrespondertraining.gov

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