



The National Demolition Association Report

DEMOLITION CONTRACTORS CAN STRENGTHEN FIRST RESPONSE TEAM EFFORTS

March 2021

National Demolition Association

2001 K Street NW, 3rd Floor North,

Washington, DC 20006

202.367.1152

info@demolitionassociation.com

www.demolitionassociation.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary..... 3

Introduction 5

Who Are America’s Traditional First Responders? 6

How is the Government Responding? 6

Why Should Demolition Contractors Be on the Team? 8

What Are Demolition Contractors’ Special Skills? 8

Conclusion..... 11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The actions of First Response Teams are critical to saving lives and keeping order. The attack on the nation of 9/11 focused the nation's attention on the importance of the teams' training, equipment, and resources.
- President George W. Bush's First Responder Initiative earmarked \$3.5 billion for the needs of First Responders. The objective is to evaluate and build First Response capabilities. The Department of Homeland Security's Office for Domestic Preparedness also provides training and funds for needed improvements, as does the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration has been playing a key role in disaster site worker training.
- The role of the demolition contractor is not clearly understood by most Americans. Qualified demolition contractors with knowledge of hazardous materials and equipped with sophisticated specialized demolition and debris management equipment can provide invaluable services. Many demolition contractors have played key roles in most American disasters, including the attack of 9/11, the U.S. Senate anthrax contamination, the recovery and final demolition of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, and the cleanup of the 1989 California earthquakes. Demolition contractors are involved in cleanup after hurricanes, tornados, and floods as well as providing assistance at local fire scenes. Many demolition contractors' staffs include technical managers and a HAZMAT trained labor force.
- Demolition equipment, such as hydraulic excavators with special attachments, often enable First Responders to free trapped victims more quickly in certain disasters. Demolition contractors, fully equipped with a variety of Personal Protective Equipment, are also experienced in identifying potentially dangerous materials and conditions at a disaster site.
- Today's demolition contractors are capable of providing realistic First Responder training at select demolition sites throughout the U.S. These sites can be configured to mirror any man-made or natural disaster for practical training and evaluation.
- Demolition contractors can supplement the important work of Firefighters, Police, and Emergency Medical Services with the on-site equipment and expertise to help save lives, assist in recovery efforts, and make disaster sites safer to the community.

- Now it is time to evaluate and recruit demolition contractors as **Technical and Skilled Support** members, before the next natural or man-made disaster occurs. The National Demolition Association maintains a directory of qualified candidates for every geographical region and is poised to provide the needed assistance to local, state, and federal response teams.

INTRODUCTION

All Americans are familiar with the brave and admirable response of the New York City Fire Department, Police Department, and Office of Emergency Management immediately following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. American local First Responders – whether they be professionals or volunteers – will always be the first to react to a terrorist incident or man-made or natural disaster, playing a central role in managing the immediate aftermath. Their actions in the first hours after a disaster are critical in saving lives and keeping order.

The attack of 9/11 has focused the nation's attention on the importance of these First Responders, as well as the equipment, training, and the utilization of other resources that are at their disposal prior to a disaster occurring. With prior planning so important, it may be necessary to include other service providers who are trained and equipped to assist the Firefighters, Police, and Emergency Medical Services with technical advice, specialized equipment, and skilled workers.

The National Demolition Association (NDA) proposes that qualified, experienced demolition contractors be part of the skilled support team of local, state, and federal First Responders.

Experienced with unstable structures, skilled in operating highly complex disaster debris management equipment, and knowledgeable in handling hazardous materials - demolition contractors can effectively complement the response capabilities of First Responders. Now is the time for each community to improve its response capabilities and evaluate operational improvements that could be made - before the next disaster occurs. NDA members are standing by, ready to support and work with America's First Response Teams in their worthy task.

WHO ARE AMERICA'S TRADITIONAL FIRST RESPONDERS?

America's First Response community's capabilities for responding to a terrorist attack or natural disaster vary widely across the country, according to White House figures. Many areas have little or no capability to respond to a serious attack. Even the best prepared state and local municipalities can use additional resources to respond to a full range of threats.

Traditional First Responders from communities outside major metropolitan areas who must protect large areas with small populations face many challenges. In fact, over half of America's firefighters protect small or rural communities of fewer than 5,000 people. Many of these communities have scarce resources to react to a major event.

Nationwide, there are more than one million firefighters, of which 750,000 are volunteers. In the law enforcement arena, there are 556,000 full-time employees in local police departments, 436,000 of whom are sworn enforcement personnel. Sheriffs' offices report about 291,000 full-time employees, including 186,000 sworn personnel. The third traditional category of First Responders, nationally registered Emergency Medical Services, includes 155,000 people. All told, nearly two million First Responders regularly put their lives at risk to save lives and make America safer.

HOW IS THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDING?

Since 9/11, there has been a sea of change in the way First Responders are funded and trained. President George W. Bush's First Responder Initiative has earmarked \$3.5 billion for enhancing homeland security capabilities of America's First Responders – a greater than 10-fold increase in federal resources. The First Responder Initiative builds on the capabilities at the federal, state, and local level, providing an incentive to develop mutually supportive programs to maximize response capability.

One of the objectives of the White House initiative is to “establish a process for evaluating the effort to build response capabilities in order to validate that effort and direct future resources.” The funds can be used to help states and local communities to

develop comprehensive plans to prepare for and respond to an attack; to purchase the necessary equipment, including Personal Protective Equipment and chemical and biological detection systems; to train First Responders to respond and operate in a chemical or biological environment; and to support a regular exercise program to improve response capabilities.

Other government support for the strengthening of the First Responder effort was the formation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), with nearly 180,000 employees and a budget of \$28.2 billion, which brought together and coordinated the national security efforts of many government agencies. The principle component of DHS that is responsible for preparing the U.S. for acts of terrorism is called the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP). The mission of the ODP is “to provide training, funds for the purchase of equipment, support for the planning and execution of exercises, technical assistance and other support to assist states and local jurisdictions to prevent, plan for, and respond to acts of terrorism.” The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is now overseen by DHS, also announced in 2003 that it is providing \$225 million in grants to help state and local responders become better prepared to respond to acts of terrorism and other emergencies and disasters. The funds are provided as part of the First Responder Initiative.

The Department of Labor’s Occupational Health & Safety Administration (OSHA) in particular has played an integral role in strengthening American emergency preparedness. In a recent publication, “Inside the Green Line,” OSHA reviews its role in the aftermath of 9/11 and recommends the development of outreach and training material to address new and non-routine hazards faced by disaster site workers. In addition, OSHA works with state emergency management officials and local First Responders around the country to prepare for contingencies involving exposures to occupational hazards.

Other non-government organizations which have become involved in this issue include the Center for Emergency Response Technology, Instruction, and Policy, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium, a partnership of public and private organizations.

WHY SHOULD DEMOLITION CONTRACTORS BE ON THE TEAM?

Demolition contractors can provide First Response Teams with experienced crews and specialized equipment. The evolving, specialized technology used by the demolition industry may enable First Response teams to more efficiently move debris during searches and investigations. Experience with handling large amounts of debris will allow for safer and faster clean up of disaster sites. Many First Responders already work in tandem with qualified demolition contractors to promptly handle situations where structures must be shored and stabilized or demolished after large fires.

Demolition contractors, called in by First Response teams, have played important roles in the aftermath of many national disasters. NDA members were immediately and intimately involved in the cleanup at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon after the attacks of 9/11. Demolition contractors handled the forensic recovery effort at Fresh Kills Landfill where the debris from the World Trade Center attack was taken to be combed for forensic evidence and personal effects. One NDA member was specifically called in by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to decontaminate the Hart Senate Office Building following the anthrax contamination of Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's office and adjacent suites.

NDA members handled the demolition of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City following the domestic terrorist attack there, and helped dismantle collapsed highways and buildings after the California earthquake in 1989.

WHAT ARE DEMOLITION CONTRACTORS' SPECIAL SKILLS?

To many Americans, the phrase "demolition contractor" conjures up images of spectacular building implosions and wrecking balls. The truth is that implosions account for less than 1% of all demolition work and most contractors would be hard pressed to lay their hands on a wrecking ball. Today, more than 99% of demolition work is performed with specialized demolition equipment or skilled manual techniques.

The safe and successful demolition projects of today require a sophisticated knowledge of both physical and mechanical aspects of structures and the myriad of regulations. Decisions involving structural stability, engineering and environmental regulations are constantly addressed during demolition projects. Most NDA professionals are required to identify, remove and dispose of any and all hazardous, toxic, or regulated materials at many of their demolition projects. This familiarity with decontamination, remediation, and waste handling means demolition contractors could provide First Response Teams with a supplemental level of experience and specialty equipment.

For many years, demolition contractors have provided environmental remediation services for local, state, and federal agencies. Contractors are called on to perform in emergency situations, such as hazardous materials spills or underground tank leakage, while other contractors are involved in long-range, planned remediation. Staffing of these firms may include engineers, technical managers, shoring experts, and an experienced HAZMAT trained labor force with specialized equipment to support the effort.

Today's standard demolition equipment includes tracked and rubber tired loaders with biter buckets for debris removal and hydraulic excavators with attachments such as grapples, shears, hammers and concrete crushers. Claw-like grapples enable an operator to quickly and gently remove a piece of concrete or steel in a collapsed structure. Today's demolition contractor also owns and maintains the related mobilization equipment necessary, for an immediate response in any situation.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, disaster sites pose a multitude of health and safety concerns. The hazards and exposures are a function of the unstable nature of the site, the potential of unknown hazardous substances present, and the type of work being performed. Identifying unknown hazards is another strength of demolition contractors, who are routinely called upon to handle this task before and during any demolition project. In addition, demolition contractors know the right Personal Protective Equipment to choose according to the hazard present, whether it is asbestos, lead, or anthrax.

Demolition contractors and their staffs are trained and experienced in compliance with all local, state, and federal EPA and OSHA regulations when handling hazardous materials or working in potentially unstable environments.

Specialists in their field, demolition contractors can be depended upon to complete the skill set needed by any First Response Team. Additionally, today's demolition contractor is capable of providing realistic First Responder training at select demolition sites throughout the United States. These sites can be configured to mirror most man-made or natural disaster for practical training and evaluation.

The National Demolition Association has begun working with OSHA's Office of Training and Education to provide assistance in the development of a new training program called the "Disaster Site Worker Training Program," the training will be offered throughout the country to address the unique hazards of disaster sites including the hazards of weapons of mass destruction.

OSHA strongly recommends the creation of emergency response partnerships to promote effective disaster site management. To be most effective, these partnerships should be established before an emergency occurs, according to OSHA.

CONCLUSION

Every American would like to strengthen our country's First Responder efforts in order to make our homeland safer. Each year, nearly two million responders put their lives at risk saving others' lives and making our country safer. It is now more important than ever to prepare for not only the threat of terrorist attacks, but to be prepared for any man-made or natural disaster.

The National Demolition Association recommends that each First Response team look to qualified Demolition Contractors for assistance and support.

Experienced in handling emergencies and hazardous materials of nearly every kind, demolition contractors have the trained personnel and specialized equipment that can significantly contribute to the saving of lives. They are anxious to partner with communities to develop and enhance the safety of our country and local communities. Now is the directory of qualified candidates for every geographical region.

The difference between life and death in a situation can be a matter of seconds. The National Demolition Association would like to help provide those extra seconds.



National Demolition Association

2001 K Street NW, 3rd Floor North,
Washington, DC 20006
202.367.1152

info@demolitionassociation.com

www.demolitionassociation.org