



HOT TOPICS

Emergency Responders Seek Better Protection

Science & Technology Policy Institute A recent RAND report, *Protecting Emergency Responders, Volume 2: Community Views of Safety and Health Risks and Personal Protection Needs*, found that police, firefighters, and medical technicians believe they have inadequate protection against some of the dangers they face. Based on interviews with over 190 individuals in 83 organizations, the report summarizes the views of a broad sampling of the responder community about personal protection needs. The study's purpose was to inform federal planning to improve protective technologies, training, and coordination.

The study returned two main findings. First, priorities for improving safety and effectiveness vary for different responders. Police voiced concerns that many protective technologies they use are not developed specifically for law enforcement missions or environments. Examples include respirators and chemical-protection garments. Firefighters expressed a need for protective clothing that is lighter and allows better air circulation to reduce stress, for greater compatibility among ensemble components, and for better tracking of individual firefighters at emergency scenes. Emergency Medical Service (EMS) responders expressed concerns about two types of hazards: exposure to infectious disease and physical assault. All responders expressed concerns about threats associated with terrorist incidents, especially those involving biological and chemical agents.

Second, responders identified key areas where policy changes would improve safety and effectiveness for all responders: more widespread adoption of digital communications systems; better guidance about potential risks; expanded training and education; and assessment and benchmarking of protective equipment and performance. This study represented a continuation of earlier work that examined protective-equipment needs during the responses to the 9/11 attacks.

READ MORE ▶ [Emergency Responders' Views on Their Protection Needs](#)

Attend the Briefing RAND Washington External Affairs, in conjunction with the House Homeland Security Caucus, will be holding a luncheon briefing on the findings of the emergency responder report on Monday, September 15, 2003 from 12:00 P.M. to 1:30 P.M. in room B-339 of the Rayburn House Office Building. This briefing is for House and Senate staff. Please RSVP to sage_newman@rand.org if you would like to attend.

A Shift in Federal R&D Priorities Could Help Mitigate Losses from Natural Disasters

Science & Technology Policy Institute In recent decades, the economic costs of natural disasters have escalated. What is the potential for research and development (R&D) to reduce these losses? To answer this question, RAND examined federal R&D related to natural hazards, including earthquakes and weather. The study found that most federal R&D on natural disasters focuses on near-term predictions, which help save lives but have limited value in mitigating losses. The study suggested that more accurate loss data and a clearer framework for assessing the potential contribution of R&D would help policymakers develop a more effective strategy for reducing hazard losses.

READ MORE ▶ [Assessing Federal Research and Development for Hazard Loss Reduction](#)

Oil Refiners Expect Demand to Grow and Prices to Remain Volatile for Next Two Decades

Oil-refining industry leaders expect demand for petroleum products to grow in the U.S. over the next two decades. But industry consolidation and cost-cutting are likely to mean that prices and supplies will remain volatile. However, some refinery executives say this picture could change if more fuel-efficient motor vehicles, such as the new hybrids, become common. While industry leaders questioned the costs and benefits of regulations, most said their firms were able to meet new fuel requirements, such as ultra-low-sulfur diesel, in a timely manner. These results emerged from a study based on in-depth discussions with key members of the U.S. oil-refining industry. The study was intended to inform Department of Energy decisionmaking in areas such as refining technology development, refined-products markets and prices, environmental protection, and trade.

READ MORE ▶ [New Forces at Work in Refining: Industry Views of Critical Business and Operations Trends](#)

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