

## FDNY holds RNC Functional Exercise at Randall's Island

The 2004 Republican National Convention will roll into New York City the last week of August, bringing with it increased concerns that terrorists will target such a high-profile event. As part of the Fire Department's activities to prepare for Convention Week - which is expected to draw tens of thousands of people from around the country - the Fire Department recently conducted two tabletop exercises. These exercises assist in developing comprehensive response plans to potential situations and allow us to identify any gaps in our response.

While most of the situations focused on the location of the convention (the Madison Square Garden area) and other convention-specific circumstances, the scenarios were also designed to be plausible and stressed response capabilities for every day incidents. The tabletop tested response to a high-rise fire and explosion, a chemical release and an



**A.C. Robert Sweeney, Queens Borough Commander (standing at left), leads the RNC exercises as team Incident Commander at Randall's Island.**

explosive device detonated within a crowd.

The exercises, held the second week in June, were conducted by the consulting firms Booz Allen Hamilton, which

generously donated their services, and Kroll & Associates whose services were paid for by a grant through the Fire Safety Education Fund.

## The FDNY Exercise Design Team

FDNY has organized an Exercise Design Team as part of a newly created Center for Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness. The Team is responsible for creating a comprehensive exercise design program for the Department that will focus on developing tabletops, functional, and full scale exercises. The Team, located at Ft. Totten, is made up of a four person core staff in addition to Fire and EMS officers from each borough.

### TABLETOP EXERCISES

The purpose of the tabletop exercise is to develop, validate or refine operational plans. Participants are given a typical incident to discuss options, tactics, and overall strategy. Tabletops are usually conducted in a low stress environment and are used to exchange ideas and to formulate operational approaches to problem-solving. Tabletops would include senior level personnel, including staff chiefs, Incident Management Teams, borough commands, BC Course and FLIPS, among others.

**Example:** Tabletop exercise conducted

to discuss an unusual subway incident response.

### FUNCTIONAL EXERCISE

The purpose of this exercise is to conduct a drill as close to an actual event as possible - without deploying units and functional at any level, from firehouse to borough command. The exercise uses simulations to drive a scenario with a team of controllers to guide the exercise and evaluators to assess if the drill has met objectives. Considered a "step-up" from the tabletop, the functional exercise exposes participants to moderate stress and requires time sensitive decision-making.

**Example:** The RNC Exercise (above article) simulating a terrorist attack scenario at the Republication Convention at Madison Square Garden, with additional off-site car bombings.

### FULL SCALE EXERCISE

The Full Scale exercise simulates actual field conditions, including deployment of firefighting and EMS units, role players (victims and agents) and a full team of

controllers and evaluators. This exercise seeks to replicate high visibility, stressful field and command conditions.

**Example:** Operation Transit Safe recently conducted by OEM at the Bowling Green Subway Station in Lower Manhattan to simulate a terrorist attack on the subway - included full response by Fire, EMS, Police, DEP, MTA and other Federal, State and City agencies.

### THE FDNY EXERCISE DESIGN TEAM

Fire and EMS officers are currently enrolled in the Master Exercise Practitioner Program run by the Emergency Management Institute at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The program is run by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security/FEMA.

The three-week program includes both classroom and practical experience in the exercise design process (Tabletop, Functional and Full Scale). Upon completion of the course participants - who hail from around the country - are awarded Master Exercise Practitioners certificates.