

Collaborative Effort Provides Real-Life Public Safety Training in the South Metro Area

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Police officers and firefighters must be well-versed in the latest techniques so that they can best protect and serve their communities. The South Metro Public Safety Training Facility combines on-site facilities equipped with the latest technologies to simulate a wide variety of public safety demands to attract local, state and nationally recognized training courses. These courses are close to the communities public safety staff serve to help them face on-the-job challenges.

The South Metro Public Safety Training Facility is a collaborative effort of the Fire and Police Departments of the Cities of Eden Prairie, Edina and Bloomington and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Police Department. It took ten years from concept to realization.

The facility was principally funded by the four jurisdictions together with a grant from the State of Minnesota that encouraged the development of regional training centers throughout the state. It provides a variety of police and fire training opportunities on a three-acre, two-building campus that opened in 2003. Having a local center eliminates the need for travel and makes training available to a greater number of police officers and firefighters who might not be able to travel out-of-state. It is conveniently located near I-494 and Highway 169 in Edina.

Approximately 600 police and fire personnel regularly use the more than 24,000 square foot facility for real-life training opportunities. The center features:

- Two indoor police shooting ranges.
- Two classrooms.
- Fully padded defensive tactics training space.
- Combat simulator (made possible by a gift from Target Corp.)
- Eight-story tower with a two-story building for police and fire training, including a burn unit that can simulate fires in kitchens, living rooms and basements.
- Maze room with interior panels that can be reconfigured into various floor plans.
- K-9 training field.

Still to come are an additional burn unit for apartment fires, a hallway flashover burner and exterior burn stations such as propane tanks.

South Metro Public Safety Training Facility Director Kevin Kelleher, a former Bloomington Police Sergeant and retired Wayzata Police Chief, said the center benefits participating communities in a number of ways.

“Mature development in these communities combined with noise, ground and water pollution have reduced the number of outdoor gun ranges available for police training and opportunities for live burn scenarios,” said Kelleher. “Our facility has provided the region with two indoor gun ranges and simulated fire scenarios for firefighter training, served by state-of-the-art systems to provide an environmentally safe setting in which to hone public safety skills.”



“Furthermore, the I-494 and Highway 169 location allows firefighters and police officers to train close to the communities they serve, and gives member agencies 24-hour access,” added Kelleher. “For example, our police agencies routinely conduct firearms qualifications across all shifts in order to allow officers to qualify while on duty. And the fire agencies can train in close proximity to their communities, allowing for rapid response should they be needed.”

In addition to providing public safety personnel with a place to practice skills and conduct training on their own, the South Metro Public Safety Training Facility brings nationally recognized courses to the area. The Southern Police Institute and Northwestern University have both conducted police courses there, and a variety of instructors from around the country have helped raise the standard of training in the area. Courses are offered at significantly reduced costs to member agencies. This ability to train locally eliminates travel, lodging and per diem costs to the agencies.



The facility is available for use by non-members. Organizations such as the FBI, U.S. Customs, IRS Criminal Investigation, Federal Air Marshal, Minnesota State Patrol, Minnesota Fire School, Metropolitan Transit Police and local police and fire agencies have trained there. The center also hosts the Minnesota DNR firearm safety program for the general public. The shooting range is open to the public on Saturday mornings.

The South Metro Public Safety Training Facility is generating opportunities for cooperation among its member agencies. It not only provides realistic training, but training across all departments so each can learn from the other to improve their skills and function together as the need arises – something that is ever more important in our

changing world. For example, the Edina, Bloomington and Eden Prairie Fire Departments have joined together to develop their own fire academy at the center rather than sending rookie firefighters elsewhere for basic courses. Credits are awarded through Hennepin Technical College. This arrangement not only improves efficiency, but it also gives rookie firefighters the opportunity to learn their jobs side-by-side with members of neighboring agencies whom they frequently will be called on to assist during actual emergencies.



For more information, visit the South Metro Public Safety Training Facility's web site at www.southmetrotraining.com, call 952-653-0671 or e-mail kkelleher@southmetrotraining.com.



South Metro Public Safety Training Facility

Features

Main Building

- Two live-fire gun ranges (4-lane and 12-lane) featuring distances of 15, 25 and 50 yards.
- Two classrooms.
- Fully padded defensive tactics room.
- Interactive combat simulator (made possible by a gift from Target Corp.)

Tactical Building and Tower

- Two-story burn unit featuring natural gas burners that can simulate kitchen and living room fires.
- Maze room with interior panels that can be reconfigured to represent a variety of floor plans and challenges.
- Confined-space rescue opportunities such as an elevator shaft.
- Theatrical smoke in burn rooms.
- Multiple rope anchors for rappelling located on each floor of the tower.
- Fire sprinklers to create a realistic training environment.
- Stand pipe.
- Exterior doors, windows and balconies similar to those commonly found in industrial and residential buildings.
- Theatrical smoke throughout the building.
- Simulated ammunition to make firearms training more realistic.

Canine Training Field

In Development

- Collapse rescue trench.
- Sixth-floor burn unit for apartment-fire training.
- Hallway flashover burner.
- Exterior burn stations such as propane tanks.