



## New Fire Training Simulator Debuts on Post

As Posted in *The 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Post*, April 2013 | By: Julie Fiedler | [www.fortrileypost.com](http://www.fortrileypost.com)

After a crash landing, an F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft burst into flames with the pilot still inside. A room full of firefighters watched the horrific scene unfold on screens before them.

The scene was entirely computer-generated – part of a training simulation called Norma Brown offered during a Department of Defense (DoD) Fire Officer II course at Fort Riley.

“It’s like you’re in the real thing, but it’s virtual,” said Staff Sgt. Zach Sielaff, 436th Civil Engineer Squadron, Dover Air Force Base, Del., who was a student in the course. “It was awesome – definitely a learning experience. I took a lot from it.”

The DoD training marked the maiden voyage of the new mobile Norma Brown simulator. For the past 36 years, Fire Officer II incident command training was only available using a large tabletop environment. Leveraging updated technology from Advanced Disaster Management System, or ADMS, the new mobile simulator allows the DoD to take the training on the road.

Fort Riley was its first stop.

“This is the maiden voyage. We have never taught this at any DoD installation. Fort Riley will be the very first graduates of the ADMS Norma Brown simulator,” said Master Sgt. Stephen Thompson, noncommissioned officer in charge, Fire Officer Courses, DoD Fire Academy, Goodfellow AFB, San Angelo, Texas, who is one of the trainers. “It’s an immersion-type training. It’s a first-person aspect, so instead of looking at the table now, we actually have people as firefighters, so they’re going to walk on the scene,” Thompson said. “That brings what we do as (Fire) Officer II trainers to more of a real-life scenario.”

During the first practice run of the mobile simulator, Sielaff played the part of Chief II for the F-16 scenario.

“Basically, I was in charge of operations for whatever emergency that they dictated,” Sielaff explained. “That was my first time doing it, so it was pretty stressful ... The complexity and severity of the incident caught me off guard. A lot of moving parts that you’ve got to account for, and it’s tough to do, but it was good training.”

The system is designed to stress its participants, Thompson said.



*Two firefighters operate the Norma Brown simulator during a Fire Officer II course April 12 at Fort Riley. The training marked the debut of the mobile training system that is designed to provide incident command training for firefighters.*

“This gets very stressful. We have had students quit. We’ve had people melt down in the trainer,” he said. “This is a very intimidating environment.”

“They’re getting all this visual and audio input, and they have to make decisions. We’re constantly changing the environment, and we’re constantly giving them things to look at. That’s giving them the stress for that position,” added fellow instructor Sgt. 1st Class Brent Roberts, 169th Engineer Battalion, co-NCOIC, Fire Officer Courses, DoD Fire Academy, Goodfellow AFB.

During the simulation, speakers on the floor of the training room blare siren sounds. Ambient noise, like aircraft take-offs and landings, also are part of the audio track. Students all use one radio frequency, so there is a lot of information coming in they must sift through and act upon.

Despite the stressors programmed into the system, the Norma Brown simulator ensures a safe environment where students are able to make mistakes and learn from them.

“Nobody’s going to get hurt when we do this in Norma Brown.

Mistakes happen in there. Things go horribly wrong. But that’s all right. That’s the whole point of this training. We’re not evaluating, we’re training,” he said.

Many of the scenarios are considered Type III, a serious incident that firefighters might encounter once in their careers. By using such scenarios in training, it exposes firefighters to larger incidents, giving them experience should they ever encounter a Type III incident, a method known as recognition-primed decision making.

“The big reason why we teach this up here is so they have a Type III in their memory banks – a recognition-primed decision making – so if it ever happens to them, they can at least fall back to this training,” Thompson said.

In other words, “This is an opportunity to practice on something really bad,” Roberts said.

The system is physics-based, so instructors can’t game the system. What happens in Norma is what would happen in the real world, Roberts said.

“It’s exactly what would happen based on the wind speed, based on the moisture in the air ... Based on the tactics that they take, how accurately they put the water on the fire, the extinguishing agent that they apply,” Thompson said.

The two-day simulation training was the culminating event of the two-week Fire Officer II course, from April 1 to 16. The overall course provided professional development, introducing fairly new leaders to a range of topics, like incident command, human resources, policy composition, counseling, safety and more.

“Fire Officer II is a blend of managerial, administrative and incident command principles,” said Eric Seward, battalion Chief, Fort Riley Fire and Emergency Services. “This is advance training – professional development. It goes more into the tactics and strategy on the fire ground, as well as management (and) leadership inside the firehouse. It covers a little bit more of the functional management, functional leadership aspects of the job.”

“(I learned) something new every day – several things new every day. (It was) definitely valuable information that I’ll be able to take back and use as I progress in my rank and career in the fire department,” Sielaff said. “It’s been amazing.”

The Fire Officer II course was offered as regional training open to DoD fire department personnel from all branches of service, including civilian employees.

Twelve firefighters participated, including eight from Fort Riley, plus representatives from Air National Guard, Dover AFB and Fort Carson, Colo.



*POST Master Sgt. Stephen Thompson, NCOIC, Fire Officer Courses, DoD Fire Academy, runs the controls of the ADMS Norma Brown simulator during a Fire Officer II course April 12 at Fort Riley. The training marked the debut of the mobile training system, which is designed to provide incident command training for firefighters.*