

FOUNDATIONS

Air Force Emergency Management Program

**A Look into the Evolution of
Emergency Management
from 1960-1992**



Introduction

"History is all in the mind of the teller. Truth is all in the telling."
-Radio Flyer, Columbia Pictures, 1992.

The phrase "history is all in the mind of the teller" emphasizes that historical narratives are shaped by the perspectives, biases, and interpretations of those who recount them. History is rarely an objective recounting of facts; instead, it reflects the personal and cultural lens of the storyteller.

This subjectivity is inherent in how individuals remember and narrate events, influenced by their experiences, values, and even the passage of time, which can alter memory. As a result, history often becomes a mosaic of subjective stories rather than a single, definitive account. Different communities, nations, and individuals may interpret the same events in vastly different ways, revealing how power dynamics, cultural contexts, and personal experiences determine whose stories are amplified and whose are overlooked.

In the context of the Air Force Emergency Management (AFEM) Program, the opportunity to speak with those who lived through and influenced its development highlights the importance of capturing oral histories. These first-hand accounts provide invaluable insights that may not be found in official records, offering a deeper understanding of not just what happened but why and how decisions were made.





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Chronicling the Air Force Emergency Management Career Field Program

The AFEM Program owes much of its success to the pioneering efforts of the leaders who shaped its foundation. Visionaries such as Col Frederick Riemer and CMSgt Bert Friend established the policies and frameworks that became the backbone of disaster preparedness (DP) which then evolved into the AFEM Program. Their dedication created a culture of excellence that continues to define the field today.

In April 2023, a recognized group of retired Air Force DP experts convened to discuss the history and evolution of what is now known as AFEM. This group, fittingly dubbed “The Founders,” were not mere observers but active contributors whose efforts since the 1960s have profoundly influenced the program. Their stories add depth, nuance, and a human perspective to the historical record, illustrating the interplay between individual initiative and broader organizational evolution.

Sponsored by the Air Force Civil Engineer Center, Emergency Management Division (AFCEC/CXR), this gathering underscored the enduring contributions of these early leaders. Representing over 350 years of collective experience, the Founders shared insights into their roles in shaping the field. Members of this group included:



Pictured from left to right: MSgt (Ret) Leighton Reid, CMSgt (Ret) Denny Seckinger, Col (Ret) Fred Riemer, Col (Ret) Randy Turner, Col (Ret) Bob Larson, CMSgt (Ret) Bob Jennings, SMSgt (Ret) Margie Arnold, Lt Col (Ret) Wayne Spiegel, and CMSgt (Ret) John Jarrett. Not pictured: CMSgt (Ret) Larry Hull and SMSgt (Ret) John Thornton

Together, their efforts identified many critical milestones, from drafting foundational Air Force regulations to championing technological advancements such as computer-aided disaster planning in the 1980s. Their collective contributions standardized practices, developed innovative training methodologies, and influenced equipment advancements, leaving a lasting impact on Air Force policy and operations. While this group represents only a fraction of those who shaped the field, their work highlights the importance of documenting the contributions of all who played a role in its development.



A Legacy of Excellence

The Founders' influence is evident in today's AFEM through:

- Operational Procedures: Protocols they established continue to underpin emergency response strategies.
- Training Programs: Scenario-based, realistic training remains central to the program's educational framework.
- Equipment Innovations: Their input drove advancements in protective gear and detection systems.

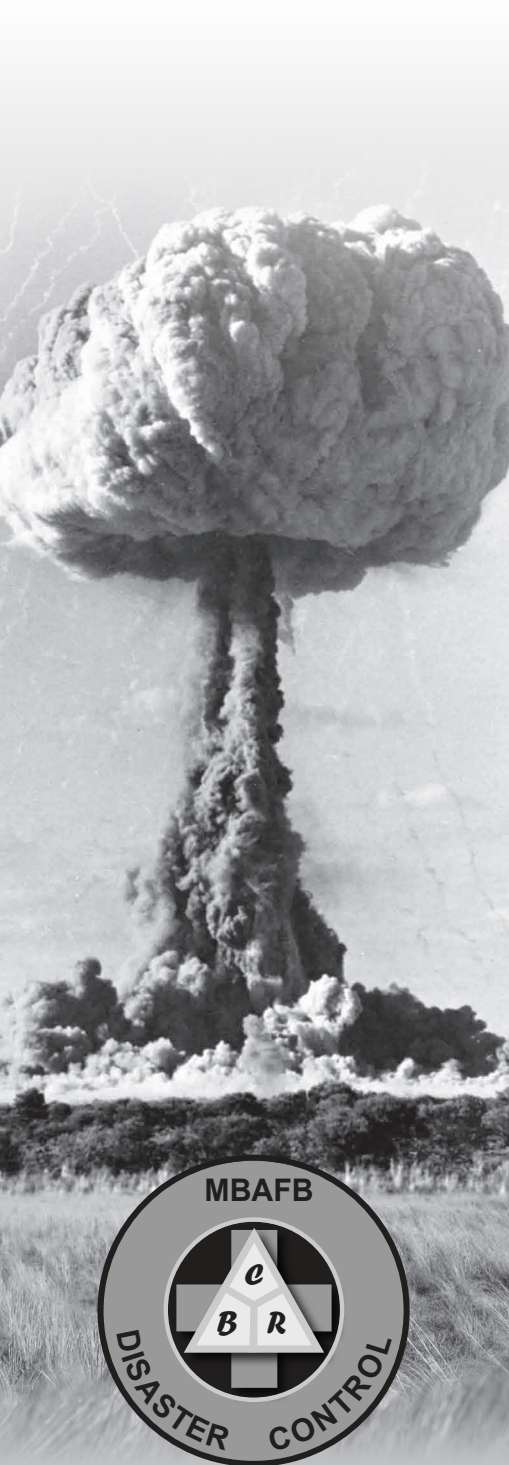
The 2023 Founders Group exemplifies the significance of preserving AFEM's history. By capturing their narratives alongside authoritative documents, the Air Force ensures these invaluable lessons endure. Such documentation not only honors these trailblazers but also provides a resource for future generations, inspiring leaders to adapt and innovate while navigating new challenges.

Recognizing the role of storytelling in history, the Air Force continues its effort to refine and expand this narrative. This approach enriches the historical record, incorporates diverse perspectives, and ensures the legacy of resilience and adaptability remains relevant.

Connecting Past, Present, and Future

Documenting the evolution of AFEM reveals a complex tapestry of milestones and overlapping events. Today, the AFEM Program stands as a vital pillar of mission readiness, addressing a wide spectrum of threats—from natural disasters to chemical warfare defense (CWD). This enduring focus on chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) threats reflect the persistent risks of modern warfare.

By maintaining operational readiness in such environments, the AFEM Program safeguards Air Force personnel and assets, fulfilling its mission to ensure success in the most challenging conditions. The stories of the Founders, enriched by supporting records, are more than historical artifacts; they are a living resource that bridges past achievements with future aspirations, ensuring the continued evolution and relevance of AFEM.





Trailblazers of DP

When the Founders came together to capture the events and decisions that shaped the modern AFEM career field and program, they shared a singular vision: to collaboratively document its evolution. Their efforts traced the field's origins back to its roots in the United States (U.S.) Army Chemical Corps during World War I, through its development following the establishment of the U.S. Air Force in 1947, and into the formalization of DP as both an Air Force program and a designated career field for officers and enlisted personnel in the 1960s and 1970s.

Through the accounts of these Founders, it becomes clear that stories play a vital role in preserving the heritage of Emergency Management. These narratives remind us of the dedication, ingenuity, and resilience that have been instrumental in shaping the field's modern capabilities.

Among the key figures is Col (Ret) Frederick Riemer who holds the distinction of being the first officer in the career field to advance from Captain to Colonel. His vision and leadership were pivotal in establishing a dedicated officer career field for DP, setting the foundation for the professionalization and growth of Emergency Management within the Air Force.



Col (Ret) Frederick Riemer

"Whatever success I had as a Disaster Preparedness Officer, including being promoted to Colonel, I owe to the training I received from truly outstanding NCOs."



Col Riemer's 36-year military career is a testament to dedication, innovation, and the power of seizing opportunities. His journey from a young sailor to a pivotal figure in Air Force DP is not just a personal success story, but a narrative of how one individual's vision can shape an entire organization's approach to critical operations.

In 1952, a young Seaman Riemer embarked on his military journey with the U.S. Navy. Little did he know that this initial step would lead to a career spanning decades and branches of service. It was the keen eye of his Navy commander that set him on a transformative path. Recognizing his potential, the commander encouraged him to pursue higher education – a decision that would prove pivotal.

Heeding this advice, Riemer made the bold move to transition out of the Navy in 1956. His pursuit of education was not a straight path but a testament to his perseverance. Through various educational venues, he demonstrated the grit and determination that would become hallmarks of his career. His educational journey culminated in the Air Force's Bootstrap Program, a fitting prelude to his commissioning in 1963 as a Missile Launch Officer, Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) 1835.

Riemer's first assignment at Minot Air Force Base (AFB), ND, in 1963 showcased his adaptability – a trait that would serve him well throughout his career. Despite his training as a Missile Launch Officer, he was assigned as the 455th Strategic Missile Wing's Plans and Intelligence Officer. This role, combined with his additional duty as the installation's Disaster Control Officer, laid the groundwork for his future specialization.

It was during his three-year tenure at Minot AFB, ND, that Riemer's potential in DP began to shine. His dual role provided unique insights into the intersection of strategic planning and disaster response – a perspective that would prove invaluable in the years to come.

In 1967, then-Capt Riemer's exceptional performance caught the eye of the 17th Air Division Commander, leading to a nomination for a newly created Disaster Control Officer position at 15th Air Force, March AFB, CA. This move marked the beginning of his focused journey in DP.

Always seeking to enhance his skills, Riemer secured a coveted slot at the non-commissioned officers (NCO) Disaster Control School, undergoing an intensive 14-week program. This training, combined with his practical experience, positioned him as a leading expert in the field.

His subsequent transfer to Headquarters (HQ) Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) marked a turning point not just in his career, but for the Air Force as a whole. Tasked with identifying systemic issues in DP Programs throughout PACAF, Riemer's analytical skills and forward-thinking approach came to the forefront.

It was during his time at HQ PACAF that then-Capt Riemer made a recommendation that would change the course of Air Force operations – the creation of a dedicated AFSC for DP officers. This wasn't just an administrative suggestion; it was a vision for enhancing the Air Force's readiness and response capabilities.

His recommendation, backed by HQ PACAF, made its way to the Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC). The approval of this proposal led to the establishment of the DP Officer AFSC 0515. In a fitting tribute to his efforts, Capt Riemer became the first officer to have his AFSC changed to this new career field.

The impact of this change was immediate and far-reaching. Manpower authorizations for DP officers were established at all Air Force installations, Numbered Air Forces (NAF), and Major Commands (MAJCOM). This structural change ensured that Air Force DP would receive the focused attention and expertise it required.



Col Riemer's expertise and vision didn't go unnoticed in the upper echelons of the Air Force. In 1972, at the personal request of Brig Gen Vandenberg, he was assigned as the first DP officer at HQ Air Force in the Pentagon. This assignment was a clear recognition of Col Riemer's contributions and the growing importance of DP in Air Force operations.

Throughout his career, Col Riemer held positions at various levels, from second lieutenant to colonel. His focus on DP took him to multiple high-level assignments, including HQ United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), HQ PACAF, and 15th Air Force. These roles allowed him to implement and refine DP policies and procedures across a wide range of Air Force operations.

His career wasn't limited to staff positions. His leadership skills were put to the test in command roles, serving as the Combat Support Group Commander at Bitburg Air Base (AB), Germany, and Seymour Johnson AFB, NC. These positions allowed him to implement DP strategies at the operational level, directly impacting the readiness and resilience of Air Force installations.

The impact of Col Riemer's work extends far beyond his active-duty years. The DP framework he helped establish has become an integral part of Air Force operations. His efforts have enhanced the Air Force's ability to respond to a wide range of emergencies, from natural disasters to man-made crises.

Even after his retirement from active duty, Col Riemer's expertise remained in demand. He briefly worked as a defense contractor, continuing to contribute his knowledge to military preparedness efforts.

Col Riemer's career is a story of vision, perseverance, and lasting impact. From his early days in the Navy to his final role as a senior Air Force officer, Col Riemer consistently demonstrated the ability to identify critical needs and implement effective solutions.

His work in establishing the DP career field for officers and shaping related policies has left an indelible mark on the Air Force. Today, Air Force installations worldwide benefit from the structures and procedures that Col Riemer helped put in place. His legacy serves as an inspiration to current and future military leaders, demonstrating how dedication and innovative thinking can lead to transformative change.

Col Riemer's journey reminds us that true leadership isn't just about rising through the ranks – it's about making a lasting difference. His career stands as a testament to the impact one individual can have when they combine expertise with vision and the determination to effect change.

In 1994, the Air Force honored his contributions by establishing the Colonel Frederick J. Riemer Award. This prestigious annual award celebrates the lifetime achievements of Col Riemer and recognizes the Civil Engineering (CE) Readiness and Emergency Management Flight that demonstrates exemplary performance in supporting CE readiness and installation Emergency Management missions. Open to active-duty and Air Reserve Component units, the competition highlights exceptional efforts in advancing the career field's goals and ensuring mission continuity. The award continues to inspire excellence across the Air Force, reflecting Col Riemer's enduring impact on DP and Emergency Management.

Col Riemer was laid to rest at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona on 3 October 2024.

Col (Ret) Robert “Bob” Larson

“While most commanders may not recognize your capabilities until a real-world incident, your training and preparation will be essential to navigating the situation effectively.”



Col Larson is widely recognized for his pioneering efforts in establishing the foundational policies of the AFEM Program. His work has been instrumental in shaping the Air Force's approach to disaster response and preparedness, leaving an enduring legacy in the field.

His journey began in 1966, when he joined the Air Force as an administrative officer at HQ Command at Bolling Field, D.C. He was informed by his leadership that they already had the position filled, so he was “chosen” for the new officer specialty of DP, which required him to attend the enlisted school at Lowry AFB, CO—an opportunity he cherished throughout his career. After his initial assignment at Bolling Field, D.C., he transferred to Tachikawa AB, Japan, in 1968, but his stay was brief as he was soon moved to HQ 5th Air Force. Over the next four years, he served with distinction, including temporary duty in Vietnam and South Korea.

Larson's career path then led him to HQ Air Training Command for three years, followed by a one-year remote assignment at Osan AB, South Korea, under the 314th Air Division. This was followed by his first Pentagon tour, where he had the privilege of working alongside then-Maj Fred Riemer. After four years at the Pentagon, Larson spearheaded the creation of the Air Force DP Resource Center (AFDPRC) at Lowry AFB, CO, designed to support the expanding responsibilities of the Chemical Defense Program within the DP mission.

Subsequently, he returned to the Air Staff as a Lt Col, where he served for two years before transitioning into a new role as Deputy Base Commander at Zaragoza AB, Spain. This position allowed him to apply his extensive DP experience to a leadership capacity. After two years in Zaragoza, he was selected to succeed Col Riemer at HQ USAFE in Ramstein AB, Germany. There, he oversaw the transition of the DP function to the CE directorate under the leadership of Brig Gen Ahearn and Col James

McCarthy. This assignment, which marked a career highlight, saw Larson promoted to colonel.

His final assignments included leading the combat support program office at Eglin AFB, FL, and later serving as Vice Commander of the Eglin Support Wing. After 26 years of distinguished service, he retired in 1992, marking the end of a career characterized by exceptional leadership and dedication.

Following his military retirement, Col Larson continued to contribute to national defense as a contractor. Initially employed by the BDM Corporation, he worked on projects supporting the HQ Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency (AFCESA) at Tyndall AFB, FL, and later moved to Eglin AFB, FL, to oversee the development, testing, and acquisition of combat support equipment. He then joined MacAulay-Brown, managing a major support contract with over 150 personnel across multiple locations, once more leveraging his DP expertise to address evolving challenges.

Col Larson's education played a pivotal role in his success. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from the University of Arizona in 1966, followed by a Master's in Public Administration from the University of Northern Colorado in 1982. Additionally, he is a distinguished graduate of the Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, and the Senior Acquisition Officials Program in Acquisition Management.

In November 2011, Col Larson was honored for his lifelong contributions to the Air Force DP career field, receiving the prestigious Cardia Draconis award. His exceptional service, both during and after his military career, reflects his unwavering dedication to advancing Emergency Management and ensuring mission readiness.

Now retired, Col Larson resides in Montana, enjoying a well-earned quieter life while reflecting on a career that has shaped the field of DP and Emergency Management.

Col (Ret) Randall “Randy” Turner

“Do the best you can, every day. Don’t worry about promotions. If you’re doing your job well, then things will take care of themselves, and you will be rewarded with that promotion.”



Col Turner originally hails from Muncie, IN. After college, he was commissioned through the Reserve Officers Training Corps Program and began his military service 1974 in pilot training at Columbus AFB, MS, laying the foundation for a career marked by dedication and expertise in DP.

Following his training, Turner’s career took a turn as he assumed the role of DP Officer at Warner Robins AFB, GA. This assignment proved to be the catalyst for his specialization in Emergency Management.

His career trajectory led him to Eielson AFB, AK, where he served as the installation Chief of DP. It was during this assignment that he completed a master’s degree while managing his role.

He was then appointed as the Director of DP at the U.S. Air Force Academy. For three years, he shaped the emergency response strategies at one of the nation’s premier military institutions, influencing the next generation of Air Force leaders.

Col Turner’s leadership skills were put to the test when he assumed command of the 3320th Correction and Rehabilitation Squadron in 1992. His ability to manage complex organizations was further demonstrated when he later served as Commander of the 3440th Technical Training Squadron. These roles showcased his versatility and adaptability, managing units with diverse missions and personnel.

One of his most significant leadership accomplishments came when he was appointed as Deputy Commander of the 3400th Technical Training Group. In this role, Col Turner was responsible for overseeing the training and development of thousands of airmen, ensuring they were prepared for the challenges of modern warfare and emergency response.

Col Turner’s progression through increasingly responsible positions in DP and Emergency Management speaks volumes about his successes in this field.

When he became Chief of the AFDPRC at Lowry AFB, CO, he played a pivotal role in shaping Air Force-wide disaster response protocols. This position involved coordinating responses to various simulated and real-world emergencies, potentially saving countless lives and minimizing damage to critical infrastructure.

Col Turner’s expertise in Emergency Management and his proven leadership abilities led to his assignment as Chief of the Readiness Division and later as Director of Contingency Support at the HQ AFCEA at Tyndall AFB, FL. In these roles, he was responsible for ensuring the Air Force’s CE capabilities were prepared to respond to any contingency, from natural disasters to wartime scenarios.

His final active-duty role as Chief of the Operations Division, Directorate of CE, at HQ Air Education and Training Command (AETC), Randolph AFB, TX, was a fitting capstone to his military career. This position allowed Col Turner to shape policy and procedures that would influence future AFEM and CE operations.

Upon retiring in 2002 after nearly three decades of distinguished service, Col Turner’s dedication to Emergency Management remained steadfast. Over the next decade, he emerged as an advocate and champion for Emergency Management initiatives. In November 2011, Col Turner was honored for his remarkable contributions to the Air Force DP Program where he received the Cardia Draconis award.

Col Turner’s career exemplifies the Air Force core values of “Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do.” His journey from a young pilot trainee to a respected leader in Emergency Management and his continued advocacy post-retirement showcase a lifelong commitment to protecting and serving others in times of crisis.

Lt Col (Ret) Wayne Speigel

"Take pride in what you do. Keep a sense of humor, but don't be afraid to tell people what you're doing and why it's important. Get them involved. It can't be done by yourself."



Born on January 25, 1946, in Cincinnati, OH, Lt Col Speigel grew up in Dallas, TX. After graduating from Bryan Adams High School in 1964, he earned a Bachelor of Science from East Texas State University, followed by master's degrees from Webster University, MO, and the University of Denver, CO.

Speigel's Air Force career began in 1968 as an instructor at the weapons controller school. His service led him to an assignment to Da Nang, Vietnam in the 1970s, but a car accident enroute to his port call resulted in a medical discharge. Rather than leaving military service, he chose to continue serving in a different capacity.

At Homestead AFB, FL, he became a DP Officer, taking over from a retired civilian despite having no formal training. After a year, he transferred to Kunsan AB, South Korea where he collaborated with then-Capt Larson at HQ 5th Air Force to develop the DP Program and found fulfillment working alongside dedicated colleagues.

His journey then took him to HQ 5th Air Force where he replaced then-Capt Larson in 1971, then moved to 23rd NORAD Region at Duluth AFB in 1975, and finished active duty as Chief, Disaster Preparedness Branch at HQ PACAF in 1980.

After leaving active duty in 1980, he moved to Topeka, KS, where he joined a chemical corporation as a technical representative. A chance encounter with Maj Gen Ralph Tice, then Kansas Adjutant General, led Speigel to transition to becoming a natural hazard planner for Kansas. Gen Tice also commissioned him into the Kansas Air National Guard as the Air Commander's executive officer.

Lt Col Speigel later moved to the Military Airlift Command (MAC) as Chief of DP at HQ MAC, excelling as Chief of the Air Base Survivability Division and serving until his civil service retirement in 1990. His

outstanding performance led to his selection for the Air Force Logistics Civilian Career Enhancement Program at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, earning him the Air Force Award for Meritorious Civilian Service. In 1990, he joined the Department of Energy's Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site as Emergency Operations Manager for various organizations including EG&G, Inc. and Kaiser-Hill Company. Also, he continued serving as an officer in Individual Mobilization Augmentee status with the Air Force Reserves until 1995, during which time he was appointed civilian Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Chemical Matters.

Before co-founding Excalibur Associates, Inc. in 1996, Lt Col Speigel's three-decade public service career included becoming a Certified Emergency Manager, receiving Homeland Security Level V certification, supporting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels, and overseeing chemical weapon demilitarization.

In 1996, Speigel partnered with CMSgt (Ret) Charlie Burns Jr. to establish Excalibur Associates, Inc. and Excalibur Security Services LLC. Their Essential Emergency Management™ Program provided technical services to major government organizations including National Aeronautics and Space Administration, U.S. Air Force, Transportation Security Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, and National Nuclear Security Administration. Lt Col Speigel retired from the Air Force Reserve in 1995 after 26 years of service.

Lt Col Speigel practices a simple philosophy – "One of our goals in life should be to live our lives each day in such a blessed, thoughtful and kind way, that if someone even thought about speaking badly of us, no one would believe it."

CMSgt (Ret) John Jarrett

"Take every advantage you can and go to any training that's available. Apply yourself and make the best of it, whether it's for 4 years or 25 years. Never stop working and advancing."



CMSgt Jarrett's career kicked off with a bang as he left Detroit, MI, and donned the badge of an Air Police Specialist in 1958. His first stop? The picturesque landscapes of Hahn, Germany. But he was just getting started. His career as an Air Police (later known as Security Police) Specialist took him on a whirlwind tour.

From the corridors of power at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, to the bustling streets of Osan AB, South Korea and down to the southern charm of Hunter AFB, GA, before heading into conflict in Vietnam at Bien Hoa and Phan Rang. Each assignment brought new challenges, new cultures, and new opportunities for growth.

In 1971, after rising to the rank of TSgt, Jarrett cross-trained into DP, proving that it's never too late to learn new skills and take on new challenges. This career shift took him back to Castle AFB, CA, but with a whole new set of responsibilities. From there, his expertise in DP led him to the NAF at March AFB, CA, the prestigious Strategic Air Command (SAC) Inspector General (IG) Team and SAC MAJCOM staff at Offutt AFB, NE. Each role brought new challenges and opportunities for leadership, preparing CMSgt Jarrett for his crowning achievement.

The pinnacle of CMSgt Jarrett's Air Force career came with a groundbreaking appointment. He became the first DP Senior Enlisted Manager, now known as the Career Field Manager (CFM), while assigned to the AFDPRC in Lowry, CO. This wasn't just a new job - it was a chance to shape the future of DP in the Air Force. CMSgt Jarrett's diverse experiences, from patrolling bases around the world to preparing for disasters of all kinds, made him the perfect candidate to lead and mentor the next generation of airmen.

In November 1983, the Los Alamos National Laboratory recognized the unique blend of skills and experience CMSgt Jarrett had cultivated during his time in the U.S. Air Force. His transition from defending the skies to

advancing scientific frontiers marked the beginning of a new chapter in his life of service. For 15 years, from 1983 until his retirement in 1998, CMSgt Jarrett applied his expertise at Los Alamos National Laboratories. While the specifics of his role remain undisclosed, one can imagine the critical nature of his work at this world-renowned institution, known for its cutting-edge research and development in national security science.

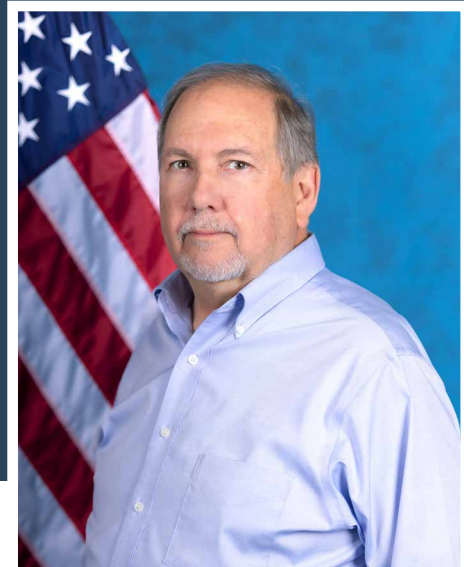
Retirement for CMSgt Jarrett didn't mean slowing down. Instead, it opened up new avenues for him to continue serving in different ways. Today, you'll find him tending to horses, mules, and cattle on his ranch near Durango, CO.

He has found a new calling that combines his love for the outdoors with his enduring commitment to those who serve. CMSgt Jarrett's most passionate work now lies with Operation Second Chance, an organization dedicated to supporting wounded, injured, and ill combat veterans. Their motto, "Helping Heroes Move On," resonates with CMSgt Jarrett's own ethos. As a past National Board Member, John has been instrumental in shaping the organization's direction. But it's in his current role that he truly shines. CMSgt Jarrett now conducts retreats in Colorado and New Mexico, creating spaces where wounded veterans and active-duty military members can find solace, support, and a path forward.

Through activities tailored to their needs and abilities, these heroes find new ways to challenge themselves and grow. CMSgt Jarrett's firsthand understanding of military life, combined with his ranching skills, creates a unique environment where veterans can feel understood and valued. Whether it's through horseback riding therapy, outdoor survival skills, or simply sharing stories around a campfire, CMSgt Jarrett is there, guiding and supporting every step of the way.

CMSgt (Ret) Lawrence “Larry” Hull

“Master your craft. Don’t live on what you think, get better. Be that person I thought I was when I was an NCO; be the best there is, don’t just come in, punch the clock, and go home.”



CMSgt Hull began his U.S. Air Force journey in March 1975, having grown up in rural Alabama, where his father served in the U.S. Army. Initially, he aspired to become a computer programmer. However, fresh out of Basic Training, during the evacuation of South Vietnamese allies following the fall of Saigon, he was deployed to Guam as part of Operation New Life. There, he aided in resettling South Vietnamese refugees, an experience that deeply influenced his sense of service and duty.

In Guam, he supported various aspects of the operation, from Base Operations to Services. During the typhoon season, he worked in the Food Service office, where he contributed to DP and recovery efforts. After 14 months, he was assigned to MacDill AFB, FL, where he faced the critical decision of choosing a specialty. Although Hull originally enlisted for systems analysis and computer programming, a backlog in training from his deployment forced him to explore other options.

At MacDill AFB, FL, Hull spent two months in DP and realized he found his true calling. He felt a pull toward teaching and guiding others. However, in 1976, only NCOs and officers could enter the DP field. Undeterred, he sought a waiver. His first request was denied, but he persisted, gaining endorsements from his unit’s officers, senior NCOs, and his MAJCOM. He was granted a waiver, and by late 1976, A1C Hull headed to Lowry AFB, CO to become the first Airman in the DP career field.

Hull faced skepticism about whether an Airman could match NCO performance. Unphased, he excelled in all aspects. After graduating, he was assigned to MacDill AFB, FL, then Kirtland AFB, NM, and later to San Vito dei Normanni Air Station, Italy. He also spent six months as an exchange instructor at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany. By 1983, TSgt Hull made history as the first 242X0 in a Tactical Air Control Center, working with combat command and control and forward air control operators.

Hull’s career continued to evolve as he took on a role as a DP inspector with the Tactical Air Command (TAC) IG for all Air Reserve Forces. After serving three years on the IG team, he joined the AFDPRC at Lowry AFB, CO. From 1987 to 1991, he served as the Air Force DP Chief of Policy and Training, reporting directly to Air Force HQ. He also served as the CFM during this period. In 1990, he was accepted into Officer Training School. However, when the Air Force transferred DP from Operations to CE, cancelling the officer career track, he chose to remain enlisted.

In 1991, SMSgt Hull was classified from a 24290 to the newly designated 3E9X1 career field and assigned to the CE Directorate at 11th Air Force, Elmendorf AFB, AK. After a year on staff, he became Chief of DP for the 3rd CE Squadron’s Readiness Flight at Elmendorf AFB, AK. SMSgt Hull was then promoted to CMSgt, leading to his next posting at HQ, Air Mobility Command (AMC).

After four years as the Command DP Functional Manager, CMSgt Hull decided to pursue his dream of computer programming. He retired from the Air Force in 1998 and worked as a systems analyst and mainframe programmer for the Army Reserve Command and the Federal Records Center. Yet, his passion for Emergency Management called him back. In 2003, he became a Senior Emergency Management Consultant at AFCEC, working in every facet of AFEM.

Throughout his career, CMSgt Hull earned numerous awards and honors, including being one of only 13 Cardia Draconis award recipients. His professional qualifications include Project Management Professional certification, Six Sigma Green Belt, and Air Force Certified Emergency Manager. He holds two master’s degrees, two bachelor’s degrees, and two associate degrees. He is also the founder and president of the AFEM Association.

CMSgt (Ret) John “Bob” Jennings

“Take this job seriously. Make it a career and be the best you can at whatever level you are, because there’s a job in emergency management for everybody.”



Initially serving as a U.S. Marine infantry rifleman from 1966 to 1969, including a life-shaping tour in Vietnam, CMSgt Jennings began his Air Force career in 1971 in the Supply career field. While stationed at Lowry AFB, CO, he joined the base’s DP Support Team, where he discovered his true passion. In a bold and transformative decision, he cross-trained into DP in 1972, setting the stage for a remarkable and impactful career.

Over the next five years, Jennings honed his skills and deepened his expertise, serving at Elmendorf AFB, AK, and subsequently at Goodfellow AFB, TX. This was followed by assignments to Sheppard AFB, TX, and Dover AFB, DE, where he further developed his capabilities. From 1984 to 1985, he was assigned to Osan AB, South Korea, an experience that expanded his perspective and enriched his skill set.

His innovative spirit truly came to the forefront during his tenure at the Tactical Fighter Warfare Center, where he tested emerging CBRN equipment, developed advanced tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), and pioneered breakthroughs in personnel decontamination processes. His contributions to decontamination procedures became a cornerstone of AFEM, with some of his innovations, such as contamination control area (CCA) procedures, still in use over 40 years later.

Upon his selection for SMSgt, Jennings returned to Elmendorf AFB, AK, this time serving with the Alaskan Air Command. His leadership was instrumental in managing responses to natural and man-made disasters, demonstrating a blend of innovation and thoroughness. Off-duty, he embraced Alaska’s lifestyle, becoming an accomplished salmon fisherman—a pastime he enjoys to this day. Reflecting his entrepreneurial spirit, Jennings launched a highly successful Hawaiian snow cone business during his time at Elmendorf AFB, AK, a venture he continued for over two decades post-retirement.

In 1991, CMSgt Jennings transitioned to what is now known as the CFM position at the AFDPRC. During this time, he oversaw critical advancements, including the replacement of aging nuclear detection equipment with the ADM-300, which became a standard for Emergency Management nuclear response preparedness for over 30 years. He also partnered with HQ AFCEA to establish the Air Force hazardous materials (HAZMAT) response program, uniting DP and Firefighter efforts in unprecedented ways.

CMSgt Jennings’ final active-duty assignment took him to Ramstein AB, Germany, where he served as the MAJCOM Functional Manager at USAFE from 1993 to 1997. Among his many achievements was the establishment of Full Spectrum Threat Response teams, the precursor to today’s CBRN response teams. After nearly three decades of active duty, CMSgt Jennings continued his service by joining the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, conducting vulnerability assessments worldwide and further influencing global AFEM practices. Later, he returned to the Air Force, working at HQ AFCEA to modernize and sustain EM supplies and equipment globally. In his final role, CMSgt Jennings revitalized the Response Task Force in USAFE, strengthened European partnerships, and enhanced international cooperation in emergency preparedness.

CMSgt Jennings retired from his civilian role in June 2021, but his legacy endures. From his early days at Lowry AFB, CO, to his transformative initiatives in Europe, CMSgt Jennings’ career serves as a testament to the power of dedication, innovation, and leadership in Emergency Management. His work continues to protect and save lives, ensuring a safer future for all.

CMSgt (Ret) Denny Seckinger

*"When you have something that's
worthy of contributing, speak.
Otherwise, listen."*



CMSgt Seckinger began his distinguished career in the U.S. Air Force in June 1971, enlisting shortly after graduating from high school. Despite what he described as "lacking culinary experience," his first five years were spent in food service. In 1976, he transitioned to the DP career field at Whiteman AFB, MO, embarking on a path that would span three decades and leave an indelible mark on the Air Force CE Readiness programs.

Throughout his 30-year career, Seckinger gained unparalleled expertise in technical operations, supervision, leadership, training, inspection, evaluation, and program management. His assignments encompassed every level of command, including installation, NAF, MAJCOM IG, MAJCOM staff, HQ AFCEA, and the CE Readiness School.

From 1976 to 2001, Seckinger's DP assignments took him to various locations, including Whiteman AFB, MO; Osan AB, South Korea; Charleston AFB, SC; Suwon AB, South Korea; and USAG Yongsan, South Korea. He later returned to Osan AB, South Korea, before moving to Scott AFB, IL, where he served first on the MAC IG team and subsequently as the DP Superintendent at HQ MAC. During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, he held the position of Superintendent of the DP and Air Base Operability Division for the 1650th Combat Support Group, where his leadership was pivotal to mission success.

Seckinger then assumed a critical role as the Air Force Program Manager (now known as CFM) for the Readiness Division, Contingency Support Directorate, HQ AFCEA at Tyndall AFB, FL. In addition to serving as the HQ AFCEA Senior Enlisted Advisor, he played a

central role in advancing the Readiness career field. He spearheaded initiatives to integrate non-prior service students into the career field—a challenging yet highly successful endeavor—and facilitated the realignment of CE Force Management positions within the Readiness Flight structure to better support Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force (BEEF) operations. His efforts also ensured the proper rank structure for these positions, strengthening the operational effectiveness of the career field.

In the final chapter of his active-duty career, CMSgt Seckinger served from 1997 to 2001 as Chief of Air Force CE Readiness Enlisted Operations and Training. During this time, he oversaw the Readiness training program through its relocation from Fort McClellan, AL, to Fort Leonard Wood, MO, in 1999. His leadership during this transition ensured the continued success of the program and its critical mission to prepare Air Force personnel for contingency operations.

After retiring in 2001, CMSgt Seckinger continued to serve the Department of Defense (DoD), Joint, and Air Force communities for over 12 years. His contributions included supporting Air Force initiatives at HQ AMC, HQ AFCEA, and bases such as Beale AFB, CA, Scott AFB, IL, and Robins AFB, GA, as well as working on DoD and Joint projects at continental U.S. (CONUS) and outside the continental U.S. (OCONUS) installations for the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.

CMSgt Seckinger's legacy is defined by his exceptional leadership, visionary contributions to the Readiness career field, and unwavering dedication to supporting the mission and the people of the U.S. Air Force.

SMSgt (Ret) Marjorie “Margie” Arnold

Née Marjorie Hoffman

“Don’t let anything hold you back. Don’t be afraid to step out of your comfort zone and do something different.”



Born and raised in Clear Lake, SD, SMSgt Arnold enlisted in the U.S. Air Force on 4 September 1970. After completing basic training, she was assigned to Randolph AFB, TX, where she began her career in the Field Maintenance Squadron before transitioning to Airfield Management in Base Operations. From there, Arnold was stationed at Rhein-Main AB, Germany, where she was selected for courier duty, traveling to various embassy and air attaché locations across Europe.

In 1975, she was reassigned to the 91st Strategic Missile Wing at Minot AFB, ND, where she began her journey into the DP career field as a member of the DP Support Team (DPST). In February 1976, she attended technical school at Lowry AFB, CO, becoming the first enlisted female in the DP career field. Unbeknownst to her and the instructors at the time, her arrival required adjustments to the lesson plans (such as decontamination procedures) to accommodate a female presence. Upon completing her training, Arnold returned to Minot AFB, ND, before being reassigned later that year to Randolph AFB, TX.

As part of the DP team at Randolph, she faced several challenges due to her gender. The Wing and Base Commanders expressed reservations about her responding to aircraft accidents, believing such situations were “no place for a woman.” Despite these challenges, Arnold continued to break barriers throughout her career.

Her subsequent assignments included NAS Keflavik, Iceland in 1979; 12th Air Force at Bergstrom AFB, TX, in 1980; and the Electronic Security Command (ESC) IG team at Kelly AFB, TX, in 1983, where once again, she broke barriers as the only female on the team. Many times, she was the first enlisted female over the rank of SrA or

SSgt that any of the units had ever witnessed. She spent many hours at round-table discussions with the women in the units talking about the DP career field and Air Force challenges in general. Because the ESC units were tenant organizations, not only did she have to determine compliance with ESC DP requirements, but she also had to ensure the units were in compliance with host base requirements. She gained a wealth of knowledge about all the other MAJCOM missions, DP programs, manning, etc. This broad knowledge base prepared her well for her final assignment to the AFMPC at Randolph AFB, TX, in June 1985, where she became the career field Functional Manager at AFMPC. In this role, she not only managed the manning for the DP career field but also oversaw personnel in Ground Safety, Aircrew Life Support (now Aircrew Flight Equipment), and Survival Instructor positions. SMSgt Arnold retired from the Air Force on 31 October 1991, after 21 years of service.

After a ten-year break, SMSgt Arnold joined Battelle Memorial Institute as a defense contractor, contributing to various DoD and Homeland Security projects for the next 14 years. In addition to her professional career, she volunteers with the Conservation Society of San Antonio, serving on the Board of Directors, holding several Executive Committee positions, and served two years as Chairman of the organization’s “A Night in Old San Antonio”, the largest historic preservation fundraising event in the U.S.

She is married to SMSgt (Ret) Mike Arnold, who served in the Air Force from 1967 to 1994 and is also a long-time member of the DP career field.

SMSgt (Ret) John Thornton

"Don't cut corners in program management, understand requirements, and develop goals and objectives to achieve mission success."



SMSgt Thornton's distinguished U.S. Air Force career began in 1961 in his hometown of Huntington, WV. After completing basic training at Lackland AFB, TX, and specialized training in Aircraft Control and Warning Operations at Keesler AFB, MS, Thornton spent his early years as an Aircraft Control and Warning Operator in Germany and Nevada. These assignments gave him a global perspective and honed his technical skills, laying the groundwork for a career defined by leadership and adaptability.

A pivotal moment came when Thornton transitioned to the Disaster Control field, completing a rigorous 17-week course at Lowry AFB, CO. This marked the start of his specialization in Emergency Management, where his expertise and leadership would leave a lasting legacy.

His assignments highlighted his ability to lead and innovate. At Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai AFB during the Vietnam War, he managed emergency responses to aircraft accidents and in-flight crises, refining his crisis management skills under intense conditions. Later, at Ellsworth AFB, SD, he managed the wing's DP Program, focusing on strategic planning and operational readiness. At Wiesbaden AB, Germany, Thornton established and led the Central European Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) cell, a critical Cold War-era initiative that bolstered European preparedness against nuclear threats.

His expertise also earned him assignments at HQ USAFE and HQ SAC, where he influenced DP policies across Europe and supported nuclear safety and Emergency Management operations at the strategic level.

SMSgt Thornton played key roles in several significant disaster responses. At Ellsworth AFB, SD, he coordinated military and civilian efforts during the devastating 1972 Rapid City flood, highlighting the Air Force's role in

domestic crises. While at HQ SAC, he contributed to the management of the 1980 Damascus Titan Missile Accident, applying his NBC preparedness expertise to address the nuclear crisis. In his civilian role as Division Chief for Air Base Operability at Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, SMSgt Thornton led the response to the 1985 terrorist bombing of the Wing Headquarters Building, demonstrating the enduring value of his military experience.

Beyond immediate crisis response, SMSgt Thornton advanced Emergency Management through technical innovation and program development. At Rhein-Main AB, Germany, he introduced KMU 450 Collective Protection Systems, enhancing readiness against chemical and biological (CB) threats. Following the 9/11 attacks, he was instrumental in creating a National Incident Management System-compliant incident management system for the Air Force, improving coordination with civilian agencies. As head of the DP/Emergency Management Program at HQ AFCEA, SMSgt Thornton expanded the agency's capabilities to address emerging global threats.

SMSgt Thornton's career spanned major global events, from the Cold War and Vietnam War to the post-9/11 era, and his contributions ensured the Air Force remained adaptable to evolving challenges. His work in NBC preparedness, crisis response, and program innovation underscored the importance of resilience in safeguarding military and civilian communities.

SMSgt Thornton's nearly four decades of service showcase a deep commitment to duty, honor, and unwavering standards. He is the third recipient of the Cardia Draconis award. His legacy continues to inspire future generations of Emergency Management professionals, ensuring preparedness and adaptability remain at the forefront of Air Force operations.

MSgt (Ret) Leighton Reid

"You might join for one reason, but you'll stay for a hundred more. The skills you learn, the friends you make, and the experiences you have - they'll shape you in ways you never imagined."



When life hands you a draft notice, make lemonade! That's exactly what MSgt Reid did when he found himself staring at those dreaded words. Instead of sulking, he thought, "Why not make the most of it?" and marched right into the Air Force recruiter's office. Little did he know, this decision would lead to a whirlwind adventure spanning decades and continents.

In 1974, Reid graduated from Kaiserslautern High School in Germany, carrying the unique perspective of an Army brat. With military life already in his blood, he enlisted in the Air Force as an F-4E Weapons Control System Technician. This role was the first step in a career filled with technological challenges and critical responsibilities.

In 1977, while stationed at MacDill AFB, FL, he transitioned to the DP field, coinciding with the Air Force's significant ramp-up of CBRN defense operations. This put him at the forefront of enhancing equipment, training, and manpower for some of the most crucial protocols in the military.

One of his most notable positions was serving as Superintendent of USAFE Silver Flag at Ramstein AB, Germany. Here, he played a key role in training and preparing Air Force personnel for various disaster scenarios.

In 1996, while assigned to the 4404th Provisional Wing as Superintendent of DP in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, Reid faced a crisis that would test every skill he had honed over his career. On 25 June, Hezbollah al-Hejaz terrorists detonated a truck bomb near the Khobar Towers complex, where Reid and his fellow personnel were stationed. The attack resulted in the deaths of 19 American Airmen and left 498 others injured.

In the chaos that ensued, his training kicked into high gear. Despite sustaining injuries, he provided immediate command and control support to the wing commander

and staff throughout the initial response and recovery operations. His actions in those critical hours saved lives and brought order to the chaos.

For his bravery and injuries sustained during the attack, he was awarded the Purple Heart. The experience left an indelible mark on him. "In those moments," he later reflected, "everything we had trained for became real. It wasn't about procedures or protocols anymore; it was about people – saving lives and helping our fellow airmen."

For MSgt Reid, the incident became a catalyst for growth. He didn't just survive; he used it as fuel to push forward in his career. The experience deepened his commitment to DP and Emergency Management, knowing firsthand the critical importance of these skills.

After a distinguished military career, MSgt Reid wasn't ready to hang up his work boots just yet. He joined BDM, a defense contractor, applying his vast experience to civilian sector challenges.

MSgt Reid later took a contractor position, developing TTPs at AFCEC. This role allowed him to shape the future of DP, passing on the lessons he'd learned through years of service and real-world crises.

MSgt Reid concluded his career as a contractor at MacDill AFB, FL, in 2022, returning to the place where his journey in DP and Emergency Management began 45 years earlier. Now in retirement, MSgt Reid approaches life with the same readiness and humor that characterized his military career. His approach is simple: stay prepared, stay busy, and always keep your sense of humor.

He continues to be a valuable resource in his community. He volunteers with local Emergency Management organizations, sharing his wealth of knowledge with a new generation of preparedness enthusiasts.



USAF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS RESOURCE CENTER A REALISTIC APPROACH

In the Footsteps of some of the Firsts

The AFEM career field stands on the shoulders of true pioneers, individuals who achieved remarkable “firsts” and shaped the very essence of DP and response within the Air Force. These individuals, driven by an unwavering commitment to safeguarding the Air Force, its personnel, and its assets, built the bedrock upon which today’s robust and responsive Emergency Management framework stands.

EM Career Field Firsts

- 1964** First CMSgt in the career field – CMSgt Bert Friend
- 1966** First Officer in the career field – Col Frederick Riemer
- 1972** First to die in conflict – MSgt Thomas Wood Jr. (Vietnam)
- 1976** First female in the career field – SMSgt Marjorie Hoffman Arnold
- 1976** First Airman (non-NCO) awarded 242X0 AFS – CMSgt Lawrence Hull
- 1979** First CFM – CMSgt John Jarrett
- 1992** First female CMSgt in the career field – CMSgt Denise Johnke
- 1997** First Cardia Draconis award recipient – CMSgt John Jennings

CMSgt Bert Friend - First CMSgt in Emerging DP Career Field

While Col Riemer became the first DP Officer with a dedicated AFSC, another pivotal figure in the legacy of Air Force DP emerged. Recognized for his unwavering dedication and expertise, CMSgt Bert Friend played a crucial role in shaping the DP career field during its formative years. His collaboration with Col Riemer was instrumental in establishing a robust and comprehensive program within the Air Force.

Friend began his military service in the U.S. Navy from 1945 to 1950 before transitioning to the U.S. Air Force in 1951 as an aircraft mechanic. His career took a decisive turn in 1953 when he was assigned to the 90th Bomb Wing's Chemical, Biological, and Radiological (CBR) Training Office at Forbes AFB, KS. Although the DP career field was not yet formally recognized, then-SSgt Friend stepped into the role of CBR Training NCO, laying the foundation for what would become a vital area of Air Force operations.

Promoted to TSgt in 1955, Friend became the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of the CBR Training Section at Forbes AFB, KS. His career path took him to RAF Upper Heyford in the United Kingdom and later to Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, where he served as the Disaster Control Supervisor under the 303rd Combat Support Group. By 1961, Friend had been promoted to SMSgt and served as the Disaster Control Superintendent at the 8th Air Force at Westover AFB, MA. His expertise led to his assignment as DP Superintendent at HQ SAC at Offutt AFB, NE, where he ultimately achieved the rank of CMSgt.

In 1967, Capt Riemer, stationed at 15th Air Force, recognized CMSgt Friend's exceptional knowledge and leadership and sought his assistance in officially establishing a comprehensive DP Program. CMSgt Friend dedicated several months at HAF/XOOR, focusing on developing operations, training, policy frameworks, and assessing equipment needs for DP technicians across the Air Force.

From 1962 to 1974, CMSgt Friend served as the unofficial CFM while stationed at HQ SAC, HQ PACAF, and HQ TAC. During this time, he ensured that DP technicians were not only trained and equipped but also ready to respond to a wide range of real-world emergencies. His leadership was evident in his role as Field Commander during the critical "Broken Arrow" nuclear incidents in Palomares, Spain (1966), and Thule, Greenland (1968). These incidents underscored his ability to lead during high-stakes operations involving nuclear material.

Beyond nuclear incidents, CMSgt Friend's responsibilities extended to managing responses to plane crashes, natural disasters, enemy reconnaissance, and civil defense challenges. His expertise contributed to the evolution of the DP Program, which by the late 1960s had expanded to encompass planning, specialized disaster response teams, training, exercises, and logistics. The program's scope included preparation, response, and recovery from NBC situations, as well as major accidents, natural disasters, civil defense support, and even animal eradication programs for diseased livestock.

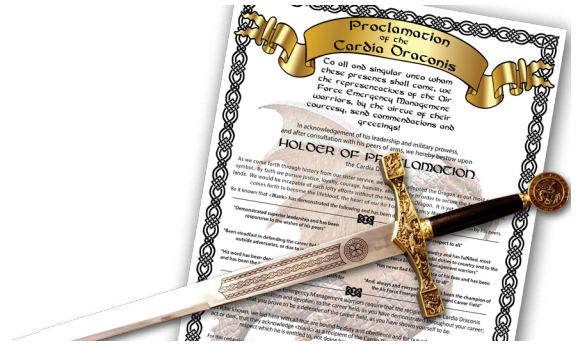
After 28 years of active-duty service, CMSgt Friend retired in 1974 but continued to serve as a civilian employee at Luke AFB, AZ, until his final retirement in 1988, achieving a combined 42 years of service in DP.

CMSgt Friend's contributions helped professionalize the field and laid the groundwork for the Air Force's modern Emergency Management programs. His efforts ensured the Air Force was equipped to handle a wide range of emergencies, safeguarding personnel and installations worldwide while shaping the career field for future generations.

CMSgt (Ret) Friend passed away in September 2022 at the age of 74, leaving behind an enduring legacy of dedication and innovation in the field of DP.

CMSgt John “Bob” Jennings - First Cardia Draconis Award Recipient

At the conclusion of his active-duty Air Force career in 1997, CMSgt Jennings was honored with a presentation of an Excalibur sword, symbolizing the battles he had fought to advance and protect the DP and Emergency Management career field. This humble recognition served as the inspiration for the Cardia Draconis Award, the highest honor for Air Force Emergency Managers, reserved for those who demonstrate unparalleled professionalism, integrity, and significant contributions to the field. Although formally presented for the first time in 2003, CMSgt Jennings is considered the first recipient of the Cardia Draconis.



MSgt Thomas Wood Jr. - First to Die in Conflict

During the Vietnam War, the importance of deliberate DP planning became evident as the Air Force faced a range of threats, from direct attacks to accidental explosions. Among the most impactful initiatives was the Vietnam bunker program, which aimed to enhance the safety of Air Force personnel stationed at vulnerable installations. The program prioritized the construction of hardened shelters and protective structures, significantly reducing casualties during enemy attacks and mortar fire. This initiative underscored the critical role of DP personnel in safeguarding lives by ensuring installations were equipped to withstand hostile actions.

However, the Vietnam War also marked a somber milestone for the career field, with the first known DP NCO killed in the line of duty. On 21 May 1972, MSgt Wood tragically lost his life at Da Nang AB in Quảng Trị Province, South Vietnam. MSgt Wood was responding to an in-flight emergency when a hung 500-pound bomb broke loose from an aircraft and exploded near the mobile command post where he was operating. The explosion not only claimed MSgt Wood's life but also served as a stark reminder of the inherent risks faced by DP personnel, who were often at the forefront of emergency response efforts in hazardous environments.

MSgt Wood's sacrifice highlighted the vital contributions of DP professionals during the Vietnam War. These airmen were responsible for implementing protective measures, training personnel on emergency response procedures, and coordinating actions during crises. Their work ensured the survivability of Air Force missions in one of the most challenging operational theaters of the Cold War era.

The loss of MSgt Wood became a symbol of the dangers faced by DP airmen and underscored the need for continued investment in training, planning, and protective infrastructure. His legacy lives on as a testament to the courage and dedication of DP personnel who served—and continue to serve—on the front lines of readiness and emergency response. The Vietnam War not only tested the Air Force's preparedness strategies but also strengthened the resolve of the DP community to adapt and innovate in the face of ever-evolving threats. MSgt Wood's sacrifice is commemorated on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., where his name is inscribed on Panel W1, Line 29.





AFEM - A Legacy of Innovation, Resilience, and Readiness

The Founders engaged in extensive discussions about the origins of the AFEM Program and the numerous transitions that have shaped it into its current form. Their reflections highlighted the evolution of a program born out of necessity in response to the horrors of chemical warfare during World War I and matured into a sophisticated, multidimensional initiative addressing a vast array of threats. These threats now include NBC hazards, natural disasters, and the ever-evolving specter of terrorism.

The AFEM Program's century-long journey is a testament to the Air Force's commitment to innovation, adaptability, and readiness. From its early days, when it primarily focused on countering the devastating effects of chemical attacks, to its expanded role in ensuring preparedness and response for all hazards, the program has continually evolved to meet the demands of an increasingly complex and unpredictable world. Each stage of this transformation reflects a deliberate effort to integrate cutting-edge technology, rigorous training, and strategic planning, all while prioritizing the safety and security of Air Force personnel and assets.

This evolution is not only technical but also profoundly human. It reflects the dedication, expertise, and resilience of the men and women who have carried the program forward through each era. Their work has established a legacy of excellence that serves as both a roadmap and an inspiration for future generations. The program has grown from a narrowly focused initiative into a comprehensive and globally recognized system capable of addressing both traditional and emerging threats.

As the Founders explored the history and future of AFEM, they emphasized that the program's strength lies in its ability to adapt and overcome. Its roots in the lessons of World War I, through the challenges of the Cold War, and into the present-day fight against terrorism and climate-driven disasters, underscore the program's enduring relevance. The AFEM Program embodies a legacy of preparedness, demonstrating the Air Force's unwavering commitment to safeguarding its mission, personnel, and the nation as a whole.



The Dawn of the U.S. Air Force

During World War II, the U.S. military under the War Department consisted of the Army and Navy. The Army was divided into three forces: the Army Air Force (AAF), the Army Service Force (including the Chemical Warfare Service, or CWS), and the Army Ground Force. In 1946, the CWS was renamed the Chemical Corps.

With the National Security Act of 1947, the Air Force became an independent branch, inheriting CB units from the Army. SAC initially absorbed these responsibilities, adding radiological protection later. Limited enlisted slots from the Army Chemical Corps were transferred to SAC, but no officer positions were included initially. It wasn't until the late 1950s that SAC formally addressed gaps by creating Disaster Control officer positions and training programs.

Foundations for Preparedness - The 1950s

AFEM traces its beginnings to the U.S. Army CWS, established during World War I. The widespread use of chemical weapons on European battlefields underscored the need for specialized training, equipment, and strategies to protect forces and mitigate threats. The expertise developed by the Army's Chemical Corps laid the foundation for the Air Force's approach to CWD, a legacy that endures to this day.

When the Air Force became an independent branch in 1947, it inherited many practices from the Army, including those related to chemical warfare preparedness. Over time, as global conflicts evolved, the Air Force adapted and refined these frameworks, incorporating advances in protective equipment, detection technologies, and comprehensive training programs tailored to air operations.

In the 1950s, the Air Force faced growing threats from "atomic attacks" due to the Soviet Union's nuclear proliferation. This led to the establishment of the Atomic, Biological, and Chemical (ABC) Warfare Program in 1951 to equip personnel with ABC defense skills. Concurrently, Passive Defense programs were launched at all bases to educate the broader force on potential threats and protective measures. As global hazards such as natural disasters and aircraft accidents gained prominence, the Air Force expanded the Passive Defense Program, introducing the 241X0 Passive Defense NCO AFSC and later renaming it the Disaster Control Specialty in 1962. Officers managing the program often did so as additional duties without a dedicated officer AFSC.

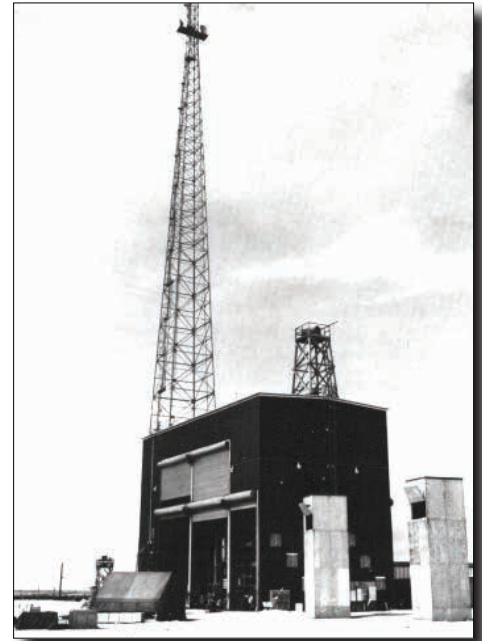
The Air Force issued its first directive on Passive Defense, Air Force Regulation (AFR) 355-3, in 1951, later revising it in 1957 as Disaster Control. The ABC designation evolved into NBC Defense by 1953, reflecting the shift in focus following hydrogen bomb developments. Despite reduced emphasis during the Korean War, annual exercises prepared personnel for emergencies, and updates to AFM 355-11 in 1956 and 1959 formalized expanded Disaster Control Program responsibilities.

Responding to Cold War Challenges

The Cold War necessitated a more robust DP capability, giving rise to the formalization of the DP career field in the 1960s. This period marked the expansion of responsibilities to include NBC defense, air base operability, and civil defense measures. Early challenges included standardizing training and securing resources, but key figures like Col Riemer and CMSgt Friend played instrumental roles in professionalizing the field.

Spanning from 1948 to 1992, the Cold War was a highly intricate system characterized by nuclear weapons, military intelligence, enemy targeting, air-defense radar stations, aerial refueling tankers, ground and air-alert bombers, overseas bases, fail-safe communication networks, alternate command posts, rockets, missiles, and prerecorded emergency messages. All these elements served a singular purpose: to sustain a precarious peace through the threat of overwhelming retaliation. This strategy, known as deterrence, relied not only on possessing a devastatingly powerful strike force capable of delivering a nation-destroying counterattack even after enduring a crippling first strike but also on demonstrating the resolve to use it.

Cold War tensions revealed significant advancements in Soviet chemical warfare capabilities, including large stockpiles of chemical munitions. In response, the U.S. modernized its chemical defense infrastructure, establishing a training facility at Fort McClellan, AL, in 1951. Innovations such as the M17 Protective Mask, standardized in 1959, improved safety and operational effectiveness. During this time, the Air Force introduced annual civil defense drills, further institutionalizing preparedness.



“Broken Arrow” Incidents and Policy Shifts

The term “Broken Arrow” emerged in the early nuclear program as a discreet code for accidents involving nuclear weapons. The first occurred in 1950 when a B-36 bomber, carrying a Mark IV weapon, jettisoned the device over the Pacific before crashing in Canada. The crew’s actions ensured the weapon’s conventional explosives detonated, preventing enemy capture. Such incidents underscored the need for robust disaster response plans and informed the growing responsibilities of the DP Program.

By the 1960s, the cessation of airborne nuclear alert operations, like Operation Chrome Dome, reduced the frequency of Broken Arrows. The last U.S. incident occurred in 1980, but global risks persisted, emphasizing the importance of safety and security measures. Today, modern U.S. nuclear weapons, safeguarded by advanced technology and stringent protocols, represent the safest generation in history. These advancements, combined with stockpile modernization efforts, ensure the U.S. maintains a credible and secure nuclear deterrent.



Courtesy of the Grissom Air Museum

The Road To Emergency Management

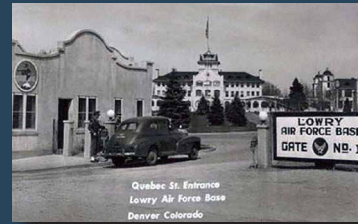
1950s

- Primary threat considered “atomic attacks”
- “Cold War” Soviet threat after WWII
- ABC warfare program developed
- Primary focus was to train selected deployable AF personnel on ABC defense measures
- AF creates enlisted AFSC 99530
- ABC instructors certified at Lackland AFB, TX
- Trained selected deployable AF personnel on ABC defense programs



50s

1956



- AFMAN 355-11, *Passive Defense of Air Base Against Biological and Chemical Attack*, developed as an enhancement to AFR 355-3
- Each installation had two NCOs and one additional duty 2nd Lt to run the program
- Three courses: *Disaster Control Operations Officer*, *Disaster Control Officer*, and *Disaster Control Instructor* taught at Lowry AFB, CO

56

1951



- First AF directive governing ABC programs was AFR 355-3, *Passive Defense*

51

1952

- First non-deliverable U.S. detonation of the hydrogen device
 - Ivy Mike device - weighed 82 short tons (74 metric tons)
 - Explosive yield equal to 10.4 megatons of TNT
- ABC term used interchangeably with CBR

52

1953

- ABC/CBR officially became the NBC Defense Program
 - Now included some civil defense roles (fallout shelters, radiological monitors, nuclear defense program, etc.)
- Munitions AFSC 461X0 picked up additional duty for the Passive Defense Program
- Dedicated skill set AFSC 241X0, Passive Defense NCO replaces the 461X0 munitions assigned additional duty personnel

53



Courtesy of the Grissom Air Museum

Advancing Resilience - The 1960s

At the beginning of the 1960s, significant gaps in Air Force installation protection revealed a pressing need for improved disaster response capabilities. By the end of the decade, substantial changes had been implemented. The Air Force faced nuclear accidents, natural disasters such as Hurricane Camille, and aircraft crashes, underscoring the necessity of experienced professionals to manage preparation, response, and recovery efforts.

Throughout the 1960s, the DP Program evolved in response to frequent and severe incidents, including nuclear and chemical accidents as well as natural disasters like hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes. However, the program initially remained largely focused on nuclear weapon accidents. In 1960, U.S. Army Maj Gen Stubbs highlighted the growing urgency of preparedness for CBR threats, warning of Soviet advancements in chemical weaponry. This concern was further addressed by initiatives such as Project 112 and Project 80, launched in 1961, which shaped the CB weapons program.

In 1962, the Air Force rebranded its Passive Defense Program as the Disaster Control Program, merging NBC warfare defense responsibilities with those of passive defense. This reorganization aimed to streamline disaster response efforts with a dedicated career ladder in March 1962 as 241X0 Disaster Control NCOs and additional duty Disaster Control Officers. The rebranding reflected two main goals: to remove the militaristic connotation of “warfare” from the program’s name and to acknowledge the growing role of the military in domestic disaster recovery. This shift was driven by a series of natural disasters in the early 1960s, which underscored the need for a structured, military-supported response to non-combat emergencies. However, despite these broader aims, the program’s focus within the Air Force remained heavily skewed toward nuclear accident response, leaving significant gaps in its preparedness for other disaster scenarios.

Training for disaster control personnel was another critical shortfall. While Disaster Control NCOs received instruction with a Civil Defense focus, officers lacked formal training due to the absence of a specialized AFSC, which also restricted funding for course development. Despite these challenges, individual advocates such as Capt Riemer and CMSgt Friend worked tirelessly to address the gaps. Waivers allowed select officers to attend NCO courses and specialized “On-Scene Commanders” training, equipping them with essential skills and fostering professional networks.

By the late 1960s, the inadequacies of the Air Force’s disaster control efforts became evident during SAC’s inspection cycles, particularly in “Broken Arrow” nuclear accident response exercises. By 1967, more than 90% of inspected units failed to meet required standards, resulting in the worst inspection record in SAC’s history. These failures, which had pass-fail implications for overall unit inspections, revealed a critical lack of trained disaster control leadership.

Laying the Groundwork - Birth of Air Force DP

The program was officially rebranded as the DP Program in 1969, reflecting a fundamental shift in philosophy from attempting to control disasters to preparing for them—a recognition of their inherently unpredictable nature. This rebranding emphasized readiness and introduced a new level of scrutiny during MAJCOM and Air Force IG inspections. These evaluations, which focused on critical areas such as manning, funding, training, and program support, gradually drove improvements and laid the groundwork for a more robust and effective DP system.

PACAF pushed for the establishment of a formal DP Officer career field. In 1967, the program underwent a pivotal transformation with the establishment of the DP Officer AFSC 0515, replacing the previous reporting identifier. This marked an important step toward addressing systemic deficiencies and professionalizing the field.

To address the increasing demands of disaster management, the SAC introduced the “Mix Fix” initiative. This program aimed to professionalize disaster management by employing civilian managers at base levels to oversee Disaster Control programs. While innovative, the initiative faced two significant challenges. First, funding for these civilian positions relied on local civilian personnel offices, resulting in inconsistent implementation and resource allocation across bases. Second, once hired, underperforming civilian managers were difficult to remove due to bureaucratic hurdles, creating inefficiencies in program execution.

In practice, many disaster control duties reverted to being additional responsibilities for military officers. These roles were often assigned to the most junior officers, such as newly commissioned second lieutenants or officers deemed surplus to base needs. These individuals frequently lacked the training or experience necessary for such critical roles, further undermining the program’s effectiveness.

Several classification changes have occurred in the DP field for both officers as well. The officer utilization field began in September 1966 as the 0105, Disaster Control specialty. In July 1967, the specialty was renamed DP. Through the diligence of Capt Riemer, the AFSC was redesignated 0515 in January 1969 and in October 1979 was broken into a new structure, 0511, 0516, 0521, and 0524. The 051X was named DP Staff Officer, and the 052X was named DP Officer.

During the 1960s, the career field also expanded to include full-time nuclear fallout shelter management, requiring the career field to train personnel on the subject as well as maintenance of shelter facilities. It also took on the responsibility of managing and training the disaster control group and air base survivability programs.



Arab-Israeli Six-Day War

The Six-Day War of 1967 began when, in response to their Arab neighbors’ apparent mobilization for war, Israel attacked and destroyed Egypt’s and Syria’s air forces. Israel also defeated Jordanian attacks. The war ended with Israel in control of the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and Jerusalem.

The Six-Day War nearly became the first major conflict involving the open use of nerve agents and biological weapons. Anticipating an attack from neighboring Arab states, Israel launched a preemptive strike on 5 June 1967, targeting Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. This campaign included invasions of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem’s Old City, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights.

Reports suggested that Egypt had stored nerve agent-filled artillery rounds in the Sinai Peninsula, prompting Israeli concerns about potential chemical attacks, especially after Egypt’s alleged use of such weapons in Yemen earlier that year. Although chemical weapons were not employed, the fear led Israel to place urgent orders for gas masks and antidotes, though these efforts were too late to prevent significant casualties had an attack occurred. Meanwhile, Egypt accused Israel of preparing for biological warfare. A United Nations (UN)-brokered ceasefire on 10 June ended the fighting before chemical or biological weapons were used.

Operation Crested Ice

On 21 January 1968, a U.S. Air Force B-52 bomber carrying four thermonuclear weapons crashed near Thule Air Base, Greenland, following a cabin fire that forced the crew to abandon the aircraft. Although not the first “Broken Arrow” incident for the Air Force, this event influenced how the Air Force prepared for and responded to nuclear accidents. The crash detonated the high explosives within the weapons, dispersing nuclear material across the sea ice. The Air Force swiftly activated the SAC Disaster Control Team to manage the cleanup operation, code-named “Crested Ice.” Livermore Laboratory, though not involved in the weapon design, played a critical role in the response by deploying its newly developed portable scintillation counter, Field Instrument for Detection of Low Energy Radiation (FIDLER). Designed after a similar incident in Palomares, Spain, in 1966, FIDLER was instrumental in detecting low-energy radiation across the affected area.



Changes to the CB Warfare Defense Programs

In April 1969, the Secretary of Defense outlined U.S. CB warfare policy, emphasizing defensive readiness, limited offensive capability for deterrence, and ongoing research to prevent technological surprise. The statement faced criticism, and tensions heightened in July when the UN condemned CB weapon stockpiling, followed by the U.S. admitting to a nerve agent accident in Okinawa.

Congress revealed open-air nerve agent testing at Edgewood Arsenal and Fort McClellan, leading to protests and suspension of such testing. An independent review praised Edgewood’s safety record but raised concerns about transporting agents on public roads. Despite recommendations to resume testing, Congress passed Public Law 91-121 in November 1969, effectively banning lethal chemical testing.

President Nixon took further action, reaffirming the U.S. no-first-use policy for chemical weapons, renouncing biological weapons for anything beyond defensive research, and ordering disposal of biological stockpiles. He resubmitted the 1925 Geneva Protocol for Senate ratification, which occurred in 1975. Nixon’s directive marked the end of U.S. CB weapon production and emphasized peace-building efforts.

In the late 1970s, President Carter updated chemical warfare policy, maintaining existing stockpiles without upgrades while pursuing international treaties to ban chemical weapons, reinforcing the U.S. commitment to arms control.

Institutionalizing DP - A Milestone for the Air Force

Despite these advancements, the program continued to face challenges, particularly in staffing qualified officers. While the shortage of NCOs improved due to formal training and professionalization, many officers viewed the DP career field as a career dead-end, leading to low morale and performance. Nonetheless, the establishment of a dedicated AFSC for officers laid the foundation for a more robust and capable program.

These developments marked a pivotal period in the evolution of the DP Program, transforming it into an essential component of Air Force operations while addressing the critical lessons learned from decades of underperformance and systemic challenges.

At the close of the 1960s, the Air Force introduced its first DP Newsletter, *Air Force Recurring Publication 355-1*. The inaugural issue’s opening paragraph highlighted the newsletter’s purpose.

“The Air Staff welcomes the opportunity provided by this first USAF Disaster Preparedness Newsletter to express appreciation of the way Disaster Response Forces have been performing their many roles, in day-to-day operations in Vietnam; in assisting our civilian neighbors following tornadoes, hurricanes; and in responding to other accidents and emergencies of the military nature.”

Despite its value in recognizing and supporting DP efforts, the newsletter was discontinued after only six issues due to competing priorities at HQ Air Staff. It was later revived in 1983 with the establishment of the AFDPRC at Lowry AFB, CO, reaffirming its role in enhancing communication and resource-sharing within the DP community.

The Road To Emergency Management

1960s

- Multiple nuclear accidents, natural disasters, and aircraft incidents cause changes
- Passive Defense changed to Disaster Control
 - AF decides a dedicated career field was needed to manage the program and creates AFSC 242X0 - Disaster Control NCO

60s

1968

- Career field name changed to "Disaster Preparedness" to match the program name
- Officer AFSC for a "Disaster Preparedness Officer" (051X) formally adopted
- First 051X officer was Capt Frederick Riemer
- Only seven officers made the rank of Colonel in the 05XX AFSC
- Col Frederick J. Riemer Award
 - Annual award honoring the lifetime accomplishments of retired Col Riemer
 - Recognizes the Emergency Management Flight that best demonstrates exemplary performance in support of the Emergency Management mission



68

1963

- Deliberate DP planning proved critical when the Air Force initiated the Vietnam bunker program

63

1966

- Disaster Control Program becomes the DP Program
- Disaster Control Officers (Operations Officer) and Disaster Control NCOs assigned to every installation
- AFMAN 355-1, *Disaster Preparedness Planning and Operations* published
- On major Air Force bases, the Combat Support Group Commander ("Base Commander") was responsible for the DP Program and career field officers and NCOs
- DP Offices were a branch of "Base Operations" later called Airfield Management
- All NCOs were cross-trainees into Disaster Preparedness from other AFSCs
- U.S. Institute of Heraldry approves the Disaster Response Force (DRF) Emblem
 - Original designed by TSgt John Zadie while stationed at Myrtle Beach AFB, SC
 - Design and color: blue for the skies, black for the search to which we return, red cross for the immediate life saving actions, and gold/yellow for the natural and acquired knowledge gained to perform our tasking
 - The triangle incorporated the knowledge into one uniform disaster control force and was used as the international civil defense symbol



66



Decade of Progress - The 1970s

Changes in national strategy prompted significant adjustments to the program. In February 1970, the program and the NCO career field were rebranded as DP, with a designated career ladder for NCOs identified as 242X0. In October 1978, the Chief Enlisted Manager code 24200 was established. In 1979, CMSgt Jarrett became the first to serve in the role of CFM, though the title was not yet formally recognized. Nevertheless, his responsibilities included overseeing all aspects of the career field and managing the NCOs assigned to it.

Throughout the 1970s, the CB warfare programs experienced further restrictions and tightened controls. In February 1970, President Nixon added toxins to the banned weapons and ordered all existing stocks of toxin agents destroyed. About a month later, the Army revealed that it had conducted CB testing in Alaska but reported that the testing had stopped. The Army also announced that the chemical weapons on Okinawa would be moved to Umatilla Army Depot in Oregon. This triggered a series of lawsuits that attracted the concern of Congress. The next year, Public Law 91-672 was enacted, which prohibited the Army from moving the weapons from Okinawa to anywhere on the U.S. mainland. Finally, Operation Red Hat moved the stockpile on Okinawa to Johnston Atoll, a small U.S. island in the South Pacific, for long-term storage and eventual demilitarization.

Demilitarization was not an easy project; heightened environmental concerns characterized the 1970s. One last sea dump took place in 1970, when, despite much negative press, CHASE 10 disposed of more M55 sarin rockets. (CHASE 10 had originally been scheduled earlier; although now out of numerical order, the designation was unchanged.) Two years later, Public Law 92-532 was enacted, which prohibited the sea dumping of chemical munitions.

Between 1971 and 1973, all remaining biological weapons were destroyed at Pine Bluff Arsenal, Rocky Mountain Arsenal, and Fort Detrick. In 1972, the U.S. signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Deployment, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons. This convention banned development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, and retention of biological agents, toxins, and the weapons to deliver them.

The Senate ratified the Biological Warfare Convention in 1974 and President Ford signed it in 1975. Although President Nixon had called in 1969 for the ratification of the Geneva Protocol, it took a few more years. In 1974, the U.S. Senate ratified the Protocol, and President Ford officially signed it on 22 January 1975. He did; however, exempt riot control agents and herbicides from inclusion in the agreement.

Lessons from the 1973 Arab-Israeli War - A Wake-up Call for the U.S.

Then another war quickly brought chemical warfare preparedness back to the forefront. The 1973 Arab-Israeli War lasted only from 6 October to 24 October 1973, but the ramifications for the U.S. chemical program lasted much longer. The Egyptian and Syrian attack against Israel on Yom Kippur and the successful Israeli counterattacks ended with a cease fire. Both sides took enormous losses in personnel and equipment.

Following the war, the Israelis analyzed the Soviet-made equipment they captured from the Egyptians and Syrians. They discovered (a) portable chemical-proof shelters, (b) decontamination equipment for planes and tanks, and (c) that most Soviet vehicles had air-filtration systems on them to remove toxic chemicals.

Another item of note was a Soviet PKhR-MV Chemical Agent Detector Kit for Medical and Veterinary Services. The set consisted of a hand pump, detector tubes, reagents in ampules, dry reagents, test tubes, and accessories. It was designed to detect nerve, blister, and blood agents. Exploitation by the U.S. specialists determined that it could detect low concentrations of nerve agents, mustard agent, cyanide, Lewisite, and heavy metals in aqueous solutions. It could also detect the same agents in addition to cyanogen chloride and phosgene in the atmosphere. One noted problem with the kit was that the procedures for using it were extremely difficult to carry out while wearing a protective suit. In addition, the glass ampules were fragile and broke easily.

Overall, the experts reported finding sophisticated chemical defense materiel and a "superior quantitative capability for waging a chemical war." The indications were that the Soviets were ready for extensive chemical warfare and might actually be planning to initiate chemical warfare in a future war. Soviet division commanders were thought to already have authority to initiate chemical warfare.

The Army actually made plans to abolish the Chemical Corps entirely. In 1973, with the signing in Paris, France, of the peace pacts to end the Vietnam War, and with the end of the draft, the Army recommended reducing the Chemical Corps in size and eventually merging it with the Ordnance Corps. As the first step, the Army disestablished the Chemical School at Fort McClellan, AL, and combined it with the Ordnance School at Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. Congress, however, blocked the complete disestablishment of the corps in light of the combination of (a) the findings of sophisticated Soviet chemical defense materiel and their capability for waging chemical war and (b) the decline of the U.S. CWD (and offense) operations called for corrective action.

To offset this, U.S. CB defense materiel must not only provide a protective system equivalent to or better than that of any potential enemy, but the physiological and logistical burdens must be such as to permit long-term use. To cope with the hazards of any potential CB-threat environment, it requires the development of an integrated CB defense system. This system must contain items for individual protection, collective protection, decontamination, warning and detection, and safe devices and concepts to achieve realistic training. An effective technological base is needed from which such materiel, responsive to user needs, can be quickly developed.

In 1976, the Secretary of the Army reversed the decision to abolish the Chemical Corps. He cited the heightened awareness of the Soviet Union's capability to wage chemical warfare as the primary reason. In 1977, the U.S. started a new effort to reach an agreement with the Soviets on a verifiable ban on chemical weapons. This effort was unsuccessful. Partly as a result, the Chemical School was reestablished at Fort McClellan, AL, in 1979.



Air Force Chief of Staff NBC Defense Program Review

The 1973 Arab-Israeli War revealed that Soviet forces were equipping their frontline personnel for chemical warfare, raising alarm within the U.S. military. In response, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) requested an evaluation of the Air Force's NBC Defense Program. With the growing threat posed by the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact against NATO, efforts to enhance the CB defense program were accelerated through the mid-1970s.

The CSAF expressed significant concerns about the adequacy of the Air Force's NBC defense capabilities, and these concerns were validated by a comprehensive inspection. The evaluation identified numerous deficiencies in key areas, including doctrine, planning, procedures, funding, manpower, equipment, research and development, and training.

In response to these findings, the Air Force launched an accelerated program to better equip and train personnel to survive and operate in chemically contaminated environments. A combined officer and NCO refresher course was introduced at Lowry AFB, CO, to enhance technical proficiency. The heightened Soviet threat also drove an increase in 242X0 manpower and marked a milestone for inclusivity, as females were authorized to enter the career field for the first time. These initiatives significantly bolstered the Air Force's preparedness for operating under NBC conditions.

In 1974, as a result of the CSAF's study coupled with the requirements generated from the 1972 Bacteriological Warfare Convention prohibiting the development, production or stockpiling of biological weapons to include toxin weapons; and the change in mission focus following the Vietnam War, a major rewrite of Air Force Manual 355-1 was accomplished. Among the many sweeping changes, the manual added more accident response procedures, a unit-level survey program but most importantly it designated responsibilities and directed CWD concepts, which created a program called Project Constant Shelter.

In the early 1970s, the career field also acquired division status at base-level working directly for the Combat Support Group Commander. This was significant in that base DP divisions worked directly for what is known as the wing commander today up until 1991.

Project Constant Shelter

From 1975 through 1981, the Air Force established Project Constant Shelter. This project provided protective suits and protective masks for all Air Force personnel in or deployable to chemical threat locations. Up to this time, only enough masks and very few butyl rubber suits were available for some forces. But after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the CSAF's study was published it was understood how vulnerable our forces were against a known Soviet Bloc offense using chemical agents. Although base supply was responsible for maintaining the equipment, DP personnel were tasked to

ensure there was enough equipment to meet requirements and perform basic program management duties.

Under Project Constant Shelter, the new authorization was two operational suits and one mask for individuals. In all, the Air Force invested over \$10 billion for research and development, which was utilized for procurement of new protective equipment and manpower.

Additional manpower was essential to support increased training and program oversight of this new focus on NBC threats, protective measures (to include use of antidotes), and the use and wear of protective equipment.



Manpower Increase

In response to the growing NBC threat and the subsequent rise in responsibilities and workload, there was a significant manpower increase in 1979. Before the implementation of Project Constant Shelter, a typical DP office was staffed with one officer, one or two NCOs, and an administrative clerk. After the project was initiated, the career field saw the addition of 150 new officer positions and 900 new NCO positions. This expansion also introduced a new officer AFSC 0156, Staff Officer, to ensure proper staffing levels at both MAJCOM and HQ Air Force.



Air Force Disaster Preparedness Resource Center



A new organization was needed to centralize the operational, training, and equipment management in DP. On 18 September 1979, the AFDPRC, under the leadership of Maj Larson, was established at Lowry AFB, CO. As the predecessor to today's Emergency Management Division at AFCEC (formerly HQ AFCEA), the AFDPRC was a direct reporting unit to HQ USAF/XOR. It was staffed by a hand-selected team of DP NCOs and officers and was strategically located at Lowry AFB, CO, to be near the DP technical school. Although the term "CFM" was not used during this time, CMSgt Jarrett as the first Senior Enlisted Leader at the AFDPRC assumed what would eventually become the AFEM CFM.

At the time of its inception, DP training across the Air Force lacked standardization, with each installation responsible for developing its own lesson plans. One of the AFDPRC's first major tasks was to create standardized CWD lesson plans with clear objectives for all Air Force personnel. This effort was followed by the development of lesson plans and training materials for DPST, decontamination teams, shelter management teams, unit DP representatives, and others. The AFDPRC also took on the responsibility of managing all Air Force DP publications, publishing a quarterly newsletter, overseeing technical orders for DP equipment, monitoring equipment modernization efforts, and managing mobility unit type code taskings.

The Road to Emergency Management

1972

- 21 May 1972, MSgt Thomas Wood Jr. is killed responding to an in-flight emergency
 - First DP NCO killed in action
 - Hung 500lb bomb exploded near the mobile command post

72

1979



- The AFDPRC activated at Lowry AFB, CO

79

1975

- Air Force implemented Project Constant Shelter
 - To offset Soviet CW offensive/defensive capabilities
 - Led by the DP Program charged with training and equipping AF forces

75

1976

- First enlisted female SSgt Marjorie (Hoffman) Arnold entered career field

76

1977



- First Airman, A1C Larry Hull enters the DP career field
 - Until this point only NCOs/officers authorized
 - As a result of A1C Hull's successful cross-training, A1Cs and SrAs were admitted into the career field

77



Adapting to New Challenges - The 1980s

In the 1980s, the Air Force DP Program underwent significant evolution, reflecting a growing emphasis on readiness for CBRN threats. Key advancements included the development of Mission-Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) procedures and the adoption of the CCA process for personnel decontamination, ensuring safe transitions between contaminated and clear zones. These practices standardized response protocols and were integrated into training programs.

The program also saw an expansion of educational opportunities, with the establishment of an Associate of Applied Science degree in DP through the Community College of the Air Force, enhancing professional development for enlisted personnel. Augmentation teams became critical force multipliers, supporting roles such as detection, decontamination, and shelter management.

Challenges during the decade included staffing shortages and the need for improved equipment and training. However, strong advocacy from senior leaders and focused efforts to align DP with operational priorities strengthened the program, laying a foundation for enhanced readiness across the Air Force.



Implementing MOPP - Revolutionizing Air Force Readiness

Performance degradation caused by chemical protective equipment had long concerned military commanders. In 1985, the Army introduced MOPP, a system allowing commanders to adjust protective gear requirements based on the threat, mission, and acceptable risk levels. Ranging from MOPP 0 (no protection) to MOPP 4 (full gear), this system provides flexibility to balance protection with operational efficiency. MOPP addressed combat inefficiency caused by heat and fatigue from wearing full protective gear for extended periods. Junior commanders were given authority to determine appropriate MOPP levels, while higher-level commanders were tasked with providing threat intelligence to guide these decisions.

In 1987, the Air Force assessed the MOPP system's applicability to its operations. CMSgt Larry Gombos and MSgt Hull led a study at Brooks AFB, TX, evaluating the Army's system. The findings supported adopting MOPP with modifications. On 1 May 1987, AFR 355-8 introduced the Air Force's version of MOPP, excluding the "mask only" option and limiting MOPP Level 3 use due to differences between fixed-site and maneuver unit operations. Visual aids illustrating MOPP levels were later developed, and by 1996, all MOPP options had been fully implemented.

The MOPP system soon gained international attention, with NATO adopting it to standardize CBRN defense procedures across allied forces. This interoperability enhanced multinational operations in environments with CBRN threats, making MOPP a near-global standard for military and emergency response organizations.

Apple Orchards and CCAs

During the 1980s, the Air Force's CWD decontamination process included a concept known as "apple orchard"—a structured arrangement of decontamination stations, designated away from critical mission areas and designed to transition personnel from contaminated to clean zones. Integral to the CCA process, these stations followed a step-by-step approach to remove and neutralize chemical agents while minimizing risk of cross-contamination.

The decontamination process began with gross decontamination, where solutions like DS2 or bleach slurry were applied to neutralize contaminants. Personnel then proceeded through stations to remove MOPP gear—gloves, overboots, and protective suits. This was followed by personal decontamination, where exposed skin and clothing were thoroughly cleaned. Before exiting, final clearance checks with detection tools, such as M8 or M9 detector paper, confirmed that personnel were contaminant-free. Trained DP teams operated and monitored the stations, employing specialized equipment like M11 or M17 decontamination units alongside water, brushes, and other materials. These orchards became a cornerstone of the Air Force's NBC defense strategy during the Cold War, enabling mission-critical operations while safeguarding health and readiness.

Advancements in NBC readiness were also driven by collaborative efforts. The Tactical Air Warfare Center (TAWC) played a role in testing and refining NBC equipment and procedures. A major outcome of this work was the establishment of CCA processes, trailblazed by MSgt Jennings. His leadership in developing and standardizing CCA procedures ensured their seamless integration into Air Force training programs. MSgt Jennings trained DP personnel, embedding these procedures into the NBC curriculum and ensuring their effectiveness in real-world scenarios.

The institutionalization of CCA processes marked a transformative leap in the Air Force's NBC defense capabilities, laying the groundwork for enhanced resilience and operational readiness. Through the collaborative efforts of organizations like TAWC and leaders like MSgt Jennings, the Air Force established a robust system to protect personnel and ensure mission success under the most challenging conditions.

End of the Decade

Project Constant Shelter began transitioning out in FY85-86, and the Air Force began using standard supply procedures for most equipment. At that time, MAJCOM DP Functional managers were responsible for funding sustainment of the individual protective equipment; it took years for the paradigm to change from DP Program management to the installation logistics functions.

By the end of the decade, the increase and change in the DP mission prompted the Air Force Director of Operations to recommend an occupational badge for the Air Force DP career field; however, the Uniform Board felt there were enough occupational badges and that another one would not be prudent.



A Transformative Decade - The 1990s

In the mid-1980s, Air Force CE initiated discussions about merging the DP Program with CE, reflecting similar consolidations like the integration of Services into CE in 1975. Functional managers supported maintaining a distinct AFSC for DP to retain its specialized focus. However, arguments arose that the career field, with around 200 officers, was too small to function independently. These deliberations persisted throughout the late 1980s, fueled by the desire to streamline operations and address organizational challenges, yet no concrete decisions were made during this time.

The Gulf War in 1991 underscored the critical role of DP personnel, as the threat of chemical warfare loomed large during Operation Desert Storm. The Air Force relied heavily on DP teams to deliver Ability to Survive and Operate (ATSO) training, ensuring Airmen were equipped to handle CBRN threats. Following the war, significant structural changes occurred within the Air Force. DP was formally integrated into CE Squadrons, shifting from an installation staff role to a dedicated flight. This realignment, along with a rebranding of the AFSC to "Readiness Specialist," aimed to modernize and expand the mission of the career field.

While these changes streamlined operations, they introduced challenges, including the elimination of dedicated DP officers, leaving junior CE officers to lead readiness flights temporarily. Over time, the field transitioned to an exclusively enlisted specialty, with leadership roles rotating among engineering officers. Despite these struggles, the 1991 realignment and subsequent changes laid the foundation for the evolution of the career field, ensuring its continued relevance and adaptability to emerging threats. This culminated in the rebranding of DP to EM in the 2000s.

Integration with Civil Engineering - A Strategic Alignment

In 1990, Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait, prompting Arab nations to call upon the UN and the U.S. to intervene. When Saddam Hussein, Iraq's president, ignored the UN-mandated deadline to withdraw from Kuwait by January 1991, the U.S. launched Operation Desert Storm. U.S. forces in the region were deeply concerned that Iraqi forces might deploy chemical agents, given Saddam Hussein's history of using such weapons during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s and against Kurdish populations within Iraq. As a result, the U.S. Air Force heavily relied on DP personnel to prepare Airmen through intensive ATSO training. This training focused on ensuring mission continuation in the face of CBRN threats.

The conclusion of the Gulf War and the end of the Cold War ushered in an era of significant downsizing and realignment across the Air Force, profoundly affecting the DP career field. These sweeping changes resulted in the integration of DP into CE Squadrons, a rebranding of the AFSC, and an expansion of its mission. Beyond traditional DP responsibilities, the career field assumed broader support roles for Prime BEEF teams, ensuring their readiness to deploy and operate effectively in contingency environments.

A pivotal transformation occurred in 1991 when the CSAF mandated the realignment of DP, shifting it from an installation staff function to a dedicated flight within CE Squadrons. This move, formalized by a directive issued in October 1991, sought to streamline command structures and enhance operational readiness. By aligning DP and Explosive Ordnance Disposal under CE, the Air Force emphasized the critical role of DP in installation management. While initial concerns about this restructuring arose, the realignment ultimately provided greater clarity in organizational structure and created a more sustainable career path for personnel. The restructuring also ushered in a significant rebranding. The AFSC for DP Specialists (242X0) was redefined as 3E9X1, Readiness Specialist, to better reflect the career field's evolving mission and its integration into CE operations.

Despite these advancements, the 1991 realignment of professional DP officers (AFSC 0515) into CE officers (AFSC 32EXG, later to become 32EXB) introduced significant challenges. Many of these officers lacked engineering credentials, and within eight years, the Air Force saw the complete loss of trained DP officers. Leadership of DP flights fell to junior CE officers, often second or first lieutenants, who were already tasked with managing Prime BEEF programs. These added responsibilities overwhelmed many, diminishing the effectiveness of DP operations, even as Prime BEEF remained functional. Over time, the career field became exclusively enlisted, with CE officers rotating through leadership roles for brief periods before transitioning to other engineering assignments. This lack of dedicated DP or Emergency Management officers hindered the field's effectiveness and left a leadership void that persisted for years.

Ultimately these changes, while addressing immediate structural and operational needs, reshaped the identity and trajectory of the DP career field, laying the groundwork for its evolution into modern AFEM.



The Road To Emergency Management

1985

85

- Pop icon of the career field emerged in 1985 as SSgt Thomas Santiago developed and presented the Smokey Joe to TSgt Charlie Smoak upon his PCS from Osan AB, Korea
- The career field immediately adopted the Smokey Joe as its own and it evolved to keep up with current technology and changes in the career field



1986

- Starting in 1986, several installations established an Air Base Operability Squadron combining DP, Airfield Management, and Explosive Ordnance

86

1991

- Gen McPeak transfers DP/ABO/EOD to CE
- CSAF realigns DP from an installation program to a flight within the CE squadron



91

1992

92

- Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) closes Lowry AFB, CO
- CMSgt Denise Johnke becomes the first female CMSgt within the career field



Conclusion

When the Founders convened in 2023, they grappled with the immense task of capturing the many changes and milestones that shaped the AFEM Program. They recognized, however, that adequately addressing every facet of its origins, transitions, and evolution would require far more effort than one gathering could achieve. Understanding the ongoing nature of this work, they entrusted future generations to build upon their efforts and continue advancing the program.

Reflecting on the legacy of the Founders and the journey of AFEM, it is clear this career field has been defined by resilience, innovation, and an unwavering dedication to preparedness. From its beginnings during the Cold War to its current focus on navigating complex and emerging threats, AFEM has consistently adapted to meet the ever-changing needs of the Air Force and its personnel.

The contributions of the Founders and their predecessors established a solid foundation for a strong AFEM program, capable of protecting assets and saving lives in even the most challenging situations. Their commitment to innovation, standardization, and training has left a lasting impact, ensuring the Air Force remains prepared to respond effectively to any disaster, whether natural or man-made.

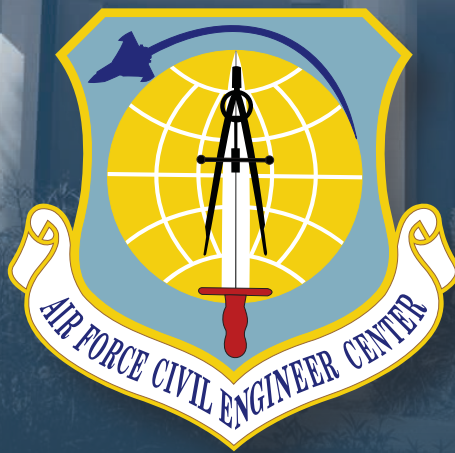
As the next generation of AFEM professionals takes up the mantle, the lessons and achievements of the past serve as both a guide and a source of inspiration. The evolution of the field highlights the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and foresight, underscoring that preparedness is more than a mission—it is a legacy.

The story of AFEM is far from complete, with each new challenge overcome and innovation achieved further solidifying the enduring foundation laid by those who came before. The significant transformations and advancements within AFEM following the Cold War, including responses to events such as 9/11 and the increasing focus on technological advancements, evolving threats, and climate change resilience, necessitate further exploration. Complementary Foundations publications will address the modern era of AFEM, building upon the historical context presented here and providing a comprehensive overview of the program's continued growth and adaptation into the 21st century.





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