



Learning Objective: The students will be able to understand the concept and tools of professional development as a lifelong commitment to their own education and safety.

For many emergency responders, the term “professional development” does not enter their thoughts until the posting for a promotional exam goes up on the bulletin board. At that point, they scramble to catch up on lessons learned, the latest and greatest technology, and the current strategy and tactics best practices. Then, once the tests are over, they go back into their usual “nine-to-five” mode: just filling the space given to them.

For many others, professional development is a tool used to satisfy a personal and constant, ever-growing desire to be the very best resource they can be for themselves, their department, and the community they serve. They believe that those who call on emergency responders deserve the very best they have to offer.

Definition: Professional development is a lifelong commitment to excellence through education, training, experience and continuing education.

Making such a commitment requires a certain single-minded approach to achieving your personal goals similar to that found in successful athletes and corporate heads. It involves daily learning and re-learning, training and re-training, so the lessons learned in basic training academies become the foundation for an ever-growing structure that improves critical thinking and ultimately safety.

Keith Heggart (2015) says: “Most educators would be aware of the term ‘growth mindset’ by now. The idea is you can work on being smarter. Whatever abilities and talents you have are just a starting point, if you work hard, make mistakes and keep trying, you can achieve.” Why wouldn’t this piece of advice apply to any worker in any field?

Applying new knowledge and skills will improve job performance and safety. For responders and leaders to be as effective as possible, they must continually expand their knowledge and skills to implement the best operational practices.

Education provides us with the “why” or theory behind what we do. Training gives us the “how” or skills to do what we do. One is not more important than the other. The technology, science and theory of emergency response is driven by the experience and training routines garnered over a millennia of history. Lives have been lost because we misunderstood or just did not know how or why we were doing what we were doing.

Find out more by going to <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/training/prodev/>.

Summary: Responders are responsible for their own safety, and a commitment to personal and professional development is a habit that will help secure that safety. Next, we will look at the mechanics and tools of professional development.

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Reference:

Heggart, K. (2015). Growth mindset is not just for school students, teachers can grow their minds too. Australian Association for Research in Education. August 3, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=1171>.