

# Standards: Who Needs Them?

An OLES initiative to  
identify standards needs  
in the responder community

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**An OLES initiative to identify standards needs in the responder community.**

- **Does this equipment work?**
- **Does this equipment solve the right problem?**
- **How do I test this equipment?**
- **How do I use this equipment most effectively?**
- **Will this equipment work with my current equipment?**
- **How do I comparison shop?**
- **Should I buy this?**
- **If this equipment fails in the field, whom do I report it?**

**These** are the questions that face the law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and overall responder community every day. Standards are valuable resources to help make those tough decisions, but knowledge of their existence and accessibility varies greatly in the responder community. There are many types of standards—some are physical, such as standard reference materials, some are measurements, such as the kilogram, and others are consensus based guidance documents. No matter which type, a standard is simply what a community follows as guidance. Responders need standards to choose and operate safe equipment, to train employees properly, and develop the most effective standard operating procedures (SOPs). Equipment, training and SOPs are the ‘fire triangle’ for the responder community. If one of these is missing or deficient, safety and effectiveness are placed in jeopardy and lives may be lost.

Unfortunately, there is little understanding about who establishes standards, and which standards are being used in the responder community. Thus, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), through its Law Enforcement Standards Office (OLES) implemented a small pilot to gather metrics and insights related to these questions<sup>1</sup>.

OLES worked with ASTM International, IEEE, and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to provide participants with access to all of their standards in order to better understand awareness and topics of interest. The participants were able to view all of the NFPA standards and OLES paid for any downloaded standards from ASTM

International and IEEE. OLES promoted the pilot through email announcements to the Interagency Board ([iab.gov](http://iab.gov)), to Lessons Learned Information Sharing ([LLIS.gov](http://LLIS.gov)) and Chemical, Biological, Radiological & Nuclear Defense Information Analysis Center (CBRNIAAC) newsletter subscribers. The pilot was also announced on responder community websites such as the Responder Knowledge Base ([www.rkb.us](http://www.rkb.us)). The pilot was launched on an SAI Global, Inc. internet platform on Aug. 2, 2011 and the standards were available for free through Oct. 31, 2011 to anyone with a government (.gov) or military (.mil) email address.

<sup>1</sup> This effort was supported by the Standards Services Group within the Standards Coordination Office of NIST.



