

Crisis City

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

There's a new city in Kansas. It has buildings, streets, and cars, but not people. The only permanent residents are dummies, and I mean that literally. What in the world am I talking about? I'm referring to a new training facility in rural Kansas which is very important to the future of our state – in fact, it can literally help save lives. This is today's Kansas Profile.

This new training facility is known as Crisis City. Crisis City Training Center is a state-of-the-art complex designed to provide training for first responders, emergency management, and the military. It was created under the leadership of the state's Adjutant General and the Division of Emergency Management to enhance the state's capacity to respond to disasters and defend against terrorism threats.

Crisis City opened in 2009. Crisis City is described as a “multi-use fully functional training complex for local, state, and federal responders, emergency management professionals, public and private industry safety professionals, as well as military operations in support of civil authorities.”

In practice, it is a 159 acre site with a classroom building, temporary housing and several training venues. “When we train, we train for real,” said Crisis City exercise specialist Brian Darnell.

For example, there is a railroad venue consisting of an actual, full-size train engine (donated by BNSF), two boxcars, a hopper car, high pressure and low pressure tank car, and a passenger car. Of course, this is a great place for practicing a derailment scenario involving hazardous materials.

Another is a collapsed structure venue. Essentially, this consists of rubble such as one might find after a tornado or earthquake. There are piles of concrete, steel girders, and cars. It looks like ground zero. This is for training dealing with obstructed passageways requiring various breaching or shoring methods to be used during search and rescue as well as K-9 search and heavy equipment lifting operations.

Another venue is the technical rescue tower. This tower stands five stories high and simulates a high rise structure with an elevator shaft designed for rope rescues as well as law enforcement and military operations.

Then there is the pipeline safety venue, which simulates natural gas or propane leaks as well as other hazardous liquids and chemicals that are transferred by pipeline and offloaded onto tank trucks. The Kansas Pipeline Association has helped fund this part of the facility.

The urban village venue seemed kind of creepy to me. It is a collection of buildings of various shapes and sizes, including streets, power lines, gas pumps, and office facilities with computers and cubicles inside them. This is used for search, rescue and extraction operations as well as what is referred to as “close quarters battle or active shooter scenarios.” It made me appreciate how brave our soldiers must be to go into such a setting.

Other venues are under development, including an ag setting for tractor rollovers, grain bin rescues, or for other farm and ranch related injuries. “We want to make an

impact for volunteer firemen or neighbors who come help a farmer in trouble,” Brian said.

Long term plans call for a confined space or trench rescue venue, an aircraft fuselage, wide area search venue, interactive law enforcement simulator, and more. About 15 crash dummies add their element to the rescue scenarios. The main building at Crisis City houses offices, classrooms, and an observation tower. Barracks can house more than 400 personnel in training. The grounds also include space for the unmanned aircraft systems that are being worked on at K-State-Salina.

Crisis City Training Center is centrally located in the state, situated southeast of Salina and near the Salina Airport and the National Guard training facility. The mailing address for Crisis City is actually Lindsborg, but it is located near the rural community of Smolan, population 216 people. Now, that’s rural.

It’s time to leave the newest city in Kansas, known as Crisis City. We salute the Adjutant General and Kansas Division of Emergency Management for making this facility available, and we especially commend the first responders, emergency management, and military who are making a difference by putting their lives on the line in crisis.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.