

NEWS RELEASE

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Homeland Security Dept. Awards First Contract to NC State

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology division and the Technical Support Working Group (TSWG) announced today a contract award to North Carolina State University for the development of the next generation of structural fire-fighting personal protective equipment, which will include chemical and biological agent protection.

"Secretary Ridge and I are delighted to award this first homeland security contract to North Carolina State University," said Dr. Charles McQueary, Under Secretary of Science and Technology. "We eagerly await their resulting products which will help protect our nation's first responders."

Under the agreement, NC State will receive more than \$830,000 for an 18-month term. NC State's proposal was selected from more than 3,300 submitted in response to a May 2003 Broad Agency Announcement issued jointly by Homeland Security and TSWG.

The NC State team will design equipment that will provide protection consistent with the high standards of the National Fire Protection Association for both structural fire-fighting protection and chemical/biological protection. These next-generation garments will provide dramatically enhanced protection against chemical and biological agents while improving the flexibility, weight, durability, heat stress reduction, service life and costs associated with currently available protective gear.

The initial prototypes will be showcased at the International Association of Fire Chiefs' Fire-Rescue Meeting in New Orleans in August, 2004. In 2005, these prototypes will be tested and evaluated in major metropolitan fire departments for functional performance and user acceptance.

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Dr. Roger L. Barker, Director of the Center for Research on Textile Protection and Comfort in the College of Textiles, will lead the NC State team of materials and clothing design experts from academia and industry. Representatives of DuPont, Globe Manufacturing Company, Portable Environments LLC, and the Fairfax, Va. and La Mesa, Calif. fire departments, will work closely with NC State throughout the project to design, test and field the improved equipment.

“We’ll be working at a rapid pace to develop prototypes of the new gear,” said Barker. “For the next 18 months, this is our top priority.”

Over the past decade, research at the NC State Textile Protection and Comfort Center has led to many advances in protective gear, including improved fire- and heat-resistant fabrics for firefighters; surgical gowns that provide doctors and nurses with greater protection against infection from blood and other biological agents; and outerwear that helps safeguard HAZMAT workers from dangerous chemical agents.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Science and Technology division serves as the primary research and development arm of the department, utilizing our nation’s scientific and technological resources to provide federal, state and local officials with the technology and capabilities to protect the homeland.