Improving Understanding and Collaboration among First Responders

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Part One of Four

Training Module Framework
After 9/11, state, local, and federal authorities flooded first responders with training materials. Most of this training material suffers from one or both of the following problems:

- The training ignores the individual cultures associated with each responder group
- Training materials tailored to one responder group almost never mention how other groups respond to the same situation, which can produce confusion and chaos in an already-turbulent crisis situation

Unlike other training products, this training will describe the cultures of the various responder groups and will teach how each group responds in a crisis situation.
What Is an Institutional “Culture”?  

- Institutional culture:
  - Explains **why** individual members of a group do what they do
  - Explains what drives and motivates them to put themselves at risk to serve the public good and save lives
  - Explains how they approach problem solving and crisis management

- The responder groups have very different cultural mandates, goals, priorities, but they also share similarities
  - Working in crisis situations demands both understanding the differences and appreciating the similarities
This training focuses on five “groups” of responders:

- EMS
- Law enforcement
- Fire
- Public health
- Private security

Please note that differences exist within each group

For example:

- Law enforcement in small counties differs from big cities
- Providing private security for shopping malls differs from doing the same for university laboratories
- The fire service has both volunteer and career members
When dealing with a crisis event, the culture of EMS can best be summarized by the following characteristics:

- Prioritization of individual injuries in order to save the majority, even if it means not treating an individual deemed too critical to save
- Will take a calculated risk based on their assessment of the scene at the time of arrival
Defining the Different Cultures: Law Enforcement

- When dealing with a crisis event, the culture of law enforcement agents can best be summarized by the following characteristics:
  - Law enforcement’s response is based on brief information at the time of the call; every call is an unknown
  - Response time is paramount and enforcement agents feel a sense of pride on being first on the scene and knowing the territory first hand
  - The first to arrive serves as an assessor of the situation and establishes whether the event is a police matter
  - Priority is given to controlling access to the scene and securing perimeters
When dealing with a crisis event, the culture of fire service personnel can best be summarized by the following characteristics:

- Overwhelming need to do something
- The response is pre-planned when possible
- Situation cannot be allowed to worsen after a fire service person arrives at the scene
  - Otherwise it is perceived as a failure to manage
  - Therefore the response must be overwhelming in order to ensure containment
- The scene is constantly assessed in order to verify that sufficient and adequate resources are available
- Update action plan
When dealing with a crisis event, the culture of public health officials can best be summarized by the following characteristics:

- Must have data to determine event and response
- A need to understand the nature of the risk to those impacted by the event and those otherwise exposed
- A need to identify and mitigate ongoing exposure to risk
- A need to provide timely information and communicate the risk appropriately
- A need to identify and locate those affected by the incident
When dealing with a crisis event, the culture of private security agents can best be summarized by the following characteristics:

- Know who to call and the specifics relevant to a particular scene (intelligence), such as access to equipment and mechanical specifics of area/building
- Willing to assist first responders (need to be recognized as a resource)
- 80% of all protective services in the United States are private security
Definitions: Stages of an Event

- Pre-event
  - Education
  - Prevention
  - Recognition

- Event
  - Communication
  - Response
  - Coordination
  - Mitigation

- Post-event
  - Clean-up
  - After action reporting

Application of Lessons Learned