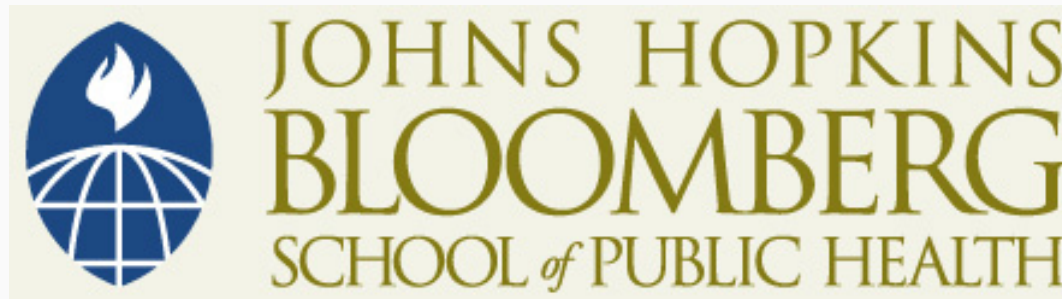


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# *Improving Understanding and Collaboration among First Responders*

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## *Part Three of Four*

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Event

- There are five distinct stages within a crisis event
  - Recognition
  - Communication
  - Response
  - Coordination
  - Mitigation

- In the communication stage of a crisis event:
  - Various groups take action to transfer and exchange information regarding the crisis
- Many weaknesses and challenges exist
  - Police, fire, and EMS generally communicate well because of a shared dispatch center
  - Communication between these three and private security and public health is generally weak

- The bulk of communication made by law enforcement is via radio telecommunications
  - Problems exist between jurisdictions and between agencies

## *Event: Communication—Fire Department*

- Fire departments communication focuses on exchanging information at the crisis scene
  - Can be done many ways (radio, air horns)
  - Initially, communication isn't as important because fire departments use standard operating procedures

- Public health personnel communicate:
  - Amongst themselves
    - ▶ Cell phones, satellite uplinks
    - ▶ Often unreliable, no uniform method
  - With the public via risk communication
    - ▶ Most health departments have one or two individuals designated to talk with the media
    - ▶ Public health personnel are also taught the proper methods to communicate public health impacts of emergencies via telephone, Internet, or in person
- Public health risk communication can be delayed because of decentralized command and need to create unified message

## *Event: Communication—Private Security*

- Private security receives threat information from many sources and communicates them appropriately
  - Direct observation
    - ▶ Will use 911 after detecting a crisis
  - Electronically
    - ▶ Fire alarms send information directly to the local fire department and the on duty security officer
    - ▶ Burglar alarms are usually sent to the security officer and to the alarm company who attempt to contact the facility/security officer in order to determine if the alarm is valid
- Calling 911 is the primary contact method when a potential crisis is detected

- In a crisis, EMS is linked directly to the firefighting communications
  - Receives and relays information in the same way as firefighting

- The response stage comes after a crisis event has been recognized and the potential for disaster has been communicated
- The response stage best demonstrates the cultural differences between groups:
  - Fire departments respond as teams
  - Law enforcement and private security respond as individuals
  - Public health personnel might respond individually, but they are supported by a global network of experts and information
  - EMS respond as teams generally

## *Event: Response—Law Enforcement*

- Police officers take great pride in responding rapidly and reacting correctly
  - Emphasis on rapid response means that they will often be the first on the scene
- If a threat is severe enough, multiple officers, and a supervisor will be sent to the scene

## *Event: Response—Fire Department*

- Fire personnel receive extensive training that focuses on a systematic approach to responding to emergencies
- Standard assignments and the Incident Command System contribute to consistency
- Standard procedures can always be augmented if the situation dictates doing so

## *Event: Response—Public Health*

- Public health response emphasizes immediate communication:
  - Within the organization (gather help as needed)
  - With officials at the community, state, and federal level
  - With the public via risk communication
- Other public health responses might include:
  - Continued surveillance
  - Delivering medicine and therapies

## *Event: Response—Private Security*

- Private security personnel emphasis is on “observe and report”
  - In a crisis, use chain of command to communicate needs and to describe the situation
- Security personnel would also have access to critical information (for example, closed circuit cameras) that would improve understanding of the situation

- Similar to fire services, EMS training emphasizes a systematic approach to crisis management

- Coordination is the most challenging, and potentially the most critical, stage of a crisis
  - Demands understanding of other cultures and an appreciation of the strengths of other groups

## *Event: Coordination—Law Enforcement*

- Coordination within law enforcement units is often between specialized units, such as SWAT and hostage negotiation teams, and the general police force
- Little or no training given to typical first responder on coordination with other first responder groups

## *Event: Coordination—Fire Department*

- Coordination for fire personnel goes through an established command post
  - Command post provides periodic information updates, which are given to individual units

- The public health workforce is a relative newcomer to organized first responder group work
  - Still serve important coordinating functions in a crisis
- Public health personnel also serve in coordinating function before a crisis

## *Event: Coordination—Private Security*

- Coordination for private security means assisting in any way possible
  - Probably will not take the lead in a crisis situation, but will work closely with other first responders

- Like fire personnel, EMS personnel are trained to report to the established command post
  - Command post will provide periodic updates

## *Event: Mitigation*

- Emphasis in the mitigation stage is on minimizing loss of life and property damage
- Mitigation could include the following:
  - Lockdown
  - Protecting a crime scene
  - Triage centers
  - Complete evacuation of a neighborhood or town

## *Event: Mitigation—Law Enforcement*

- An important part of police culture is to contain a crisis, which could include evacuation
- Although evacuating others is an important job function and cultural concern, retreating from a crisis is not in law enforcement's cultural code

## *Event: Mitigation—Fire Department*

- Mitigation for fire personnel is heavily dependent on first gaining information
  - Weather conditions, topography of the area, chemical nature of a substance (if one is present)
- Like police, retreating during the mitigation stage for fire department personnel is a last resort

## *Event: Mitigation—Public Health*

- Public health training emphasizes tracking health and recommending action to help stop the progress of disease or disrupt its transmission
  - As such, they are best suited to work with minimizing threats posed by bio-terror or chemical warfare agents
- Key part of public health mitigation duties is role in quarantine of patients
- Mitigation also means effective risk communication and mental health response

## *Event: Mitigation—Private Security*

- As with coordination, private security in the mitigation stage relies wholly on instructions from other first responder groups

- EMS culture is based on mitigation
  - Every aspect of their behavior deals with the containment of injury in order to treat and to transport

- During a crisis event, five specific stages can be identified:
  1. Recognition
    - ▶ A crisis is recognized as such, allowing for an appropriate response
  2. Communication
    - ▶ Information is transferred or exchanged regarding the crisis
  3. Response
    - ▶ Activities performed when responding to a crisis
  4. Coordination
    - ▶ Probably the most challenging stage
    - ▶ Requires multi-jurisdictional and multi-sector involvement
  5. Mitigation
    - ▶ Efforts made to minimize property damage and loss of life