Improving Understanding and Collaboration among First Responders

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Part One of Four

Training Module Framework
How Will this Differ from What I’ve Already Seen?

- 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
The Five Responder Groups

- 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
Defining the Different Cultures: Private Security

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
Part Two of Four

Pre-Event
In the education phase of a crisis event:

- Information that was gained from experience is distributed, whether through reports or training.

Distribution varies from culture to culture, but in general it begins at the lowest levels and continues throughout a responder’s career.

Some smaller agencies begin education at specialist level.
Pre-Event: Education—Law Enforcement

- What the education phase means to law enforcement:
  - Law enforcement education varies across departments and regions
    - For example, crisis events are debriefed occasionally but not as a matter of policy
  - Yearly in-service training sessions, which emphasize how to or how not to do things, rather than critical thinking or problems solving
  - Focus is on individual and his/her response
What the education phase means to the fire department:

- Continual training sessions
  - For example, to become a Firefighter II (the minimal level for career firefighters), fire department personnel must receive training in hazardous materials awareness
  - Most volunteer firefighters receive this training as well

- After action reporting
  - Most career departments and some volunteer ones require “After Action Reports” on all major incidents
  - Reports are disseminated throughout the department
Pre-Event: Education—Public Health

- What the education phase means to the public health workforce:
  - Public health is relatively new to the first responder world, which means that some ideas (for example, incident command) are being taught now to public health students and workers
  - Education for public health shifting from emphasis on workday activities to crisis response
What the education phase means to private security:

- Training is generally determined by the specific job and the specific company
  - Some private security firms provide in-house training (but the amount of training and subject matter vary widely)
Pre-Event: Education—EMS

- What the education phase means to EMS:
  - EMS receives continuing medical education
  - As with firefighting, EMS education emphasizes special training
  - Training teaches EMS responders to approach all incidents carefully
In the prevention phase of a crisis event:
- Prevention is only possible in some cases
- Information that was distributed through education is applied, specifically to prevent future crises from occurring
Pre-Event: Prevention—Law Enforcement

- What the prevention phase means to law enforcement:
  - Culture focuses primarily on reaction, but has expanded its preventative efforts over the last decade
Pre-Event: Prevention—Fire Department

- What the prevention phase means to fire department personnel:
  - Prevention comes in the form of fire education and deterrence
  - Can pre-plan in some instances
  - Culture emphasizes reaction
What the prevention phase means to public health personnel:

- One of public health’s strength areas is prevention, especially through education
- Primary prevention vs. secondary prevention
- Improving surge capacity
- Creating plans for clinics and medicine distribution
Pre-Event: Prevention—Private Security

- What the prevention phase means to private security:
  - Key player in prevention is due to the nature of the job
    - Patrolling, monitoring, controlling access
Pre-Event: Prevention—EMS

- What the prevention phase means to EMS:
  - Much like law enforcement agencies and fire departments, EMS culture does not emphasize prevention
The recognition phase of a crisis event begins when an event (or events) are finally seen as something out of the ordinary.
Law enforcement recognizes a crisis event when:

- The organization’s resources are overloaded
- The possibility for loss of life continues
- The cause/source of the event remains unknown
- Unexplained panic or fear exists in a community
Fire departments recognize an event as a crisis when:
- Resources are overwhelmed
- A situation doesn’t improve despite the best efforts of the personnel who are present and/or
- Firefighter safety is compromised
For public health personnel, an event becomes a crisis when:
- Available resources are overwhelmed
- Surveillance shows that the track of the problem (disease, radiation) will overwhelm current resources
- Calls for information from the public and other care providers exceed the ability to respond adequately
- An event demands all available personnel to work in excess of normal scope of duties
An important part of private security personnel training is learning to recognize events and notify the proper authorities and/or emergency response resources.
An event becomes a crisis for EMS personnel when a situation fails to improve (or worsens) and exceeds available resources and/or personnel safety is compromised.
The pre-event phase of a crisis event can be characterized by three distinct stages:

1. **Education**
   - Experience-based knowledge is documented, analyzed, and structured in a learning environment

2. **Prevention**
   - Knowledge that was gained from prior experience and transferred through education is applied and new means/procedures to prevent and/or mitigate the crisis event from re-occurring are developed

3. **Recognition**
   - Still technically part of the pre-event stage
   - Characterized by the instant that an event shifts from ordinary to a crisis 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.
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.
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
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
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
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.
Event: Coordination

- 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
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
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
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.
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.
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
As with coordination, private security in the mitigation stage relies wholly on instructions from other first responder groups.
Event: Mitigation—EMS

- 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
Part Four of Four

Post-Event
Post-Event

- Post-event phase of a crisis event has two distinct stages:
  1. Clean-up
  2. After action reporting
Post-Event: Clean-Up

- Clean-up stage can be many things:
  - Physical cleaning of debris
  - Minimizing potential for further disease outbreaks
  - Prevention of crimes that would take advantage of confusion following a crisis

- Depending on the type of crisis, the clean-up stage can be more hazardous than the actual crisis event
Post-Event: Clean-Up—Law Enforcement

- Police culture does not provide for clean-up after a crisis event
  - Focus on preventing criminal activity that takes advantage of crisis
  - Generally, police rely on other first responders for clean-up coordination
Fire department’s clean-up focus is ensuring that no additional damage can occur.
The clean-up stage is a large part of the public health culture. It involves many of the group’s core training (tracking disease, advising on medical treatment, etc.)
Private security can provide invaluable assistance after a crisis and enable other responder groups to be used elsewhere. For example, private security personnel can provide perimeter security.
Focus of EMS personnel during clean-up is proper disposal of any biological hazards
Post-Event: After Action Reporting

- The stage in a crisis when the opportunity and data are available to properly ascertain what occurred, when, and how
  - Vital for producing new procedures and policies to help future crisis management
- Unfortunately, very little learned information is shared between first responder groups
Post-Event: After Action Reporting—Law Enforcement

- Large agencies
  - Reporting comes in the form of “after action reports”
- Small or medium-sized agencies
  - Rarely have after action reporting
- Focus of police in reporting stage is determining if any internal policy was violated
Reporting focuses on creation and distribution of “critiques” for all major incidents
  - The resulting discussion feeds into the information loop
Post-Event: After Action Reporting—Public Health

- Public health only recently began organized after action reports
- Public health personnel create reports for state and federal agencies
  - Recent efforts to implement incident command principles have also brought more formalized after action meetings and reports, hopefully for use in creating more efficient plans and better response efforts
Although often ignored, private security should be part of the post-event reporting process

- Training creates a culture that emphasizes documenting events, results
- Also, private security has access to information not available to others, including alarm records, visitor logs, etc.
Post-Event: After Action Reporting—EMS

- Similar to fire, critiques are held for all major incidents if they are part of a fire department.
- If not, they receive feedback from other public safety agencies and hospitals and review this with personnel.
The two stages of a post-event are as follows:

- **Clean-up**
  - Varies widely from responder group to responder group, but generally involves restoring conditions to pre-crisis levels (whenever possible)

- **After action reporting**
  - Evaluation made of what occurred, when, and how during the crisis
  - Records are made of events
  - Often leads to procedural and policy changes to handle future crises better