INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Thomas E. Tarp
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Introduction

CONGRATULATIONS! You have been selected to be a member of an Incident Management Team. This could be a new assignment or you could be a seasoned veteran. Regardless, to be so selected you must have demonstrated that you have the knowledge, experience and leadership felt necessary to manage some of the most complex emergencies. For many, this will be considered the pinnacle of their fire service or resource management career.

What you probably were not told about this appointment was some unique associated roles coming your way. Simultaneously, during an actual emergency, you will be considered a hero and a villain, an emergency management expert and a great waste of taxpayer money, a savior to some and a dunderhead to others. You may also assume the positions of dictator, saint, reverend, executive, grand inquisitor, teacher, student, leader, follower, drill sergeant, politician, mother/father, as well as many others. Throw in very long work hours, more than just a little stress accompanied by too much caffeine, and it's a wonder you don't lock-up both mentally and physically. But you won't. Besides, it's not good for the image.

There are a couple of other things this appointment brings that probably were not explained either. There is an implied expectation that you will apply your training, knowledge, and experience to the best of your abilities while performing within the team setting. The other is never voiced but always expected; you will aid in the development of others encountered during a deployment so that one day they, too, can be expected to assume the responsibilities as you have. Give them an honest shot of your best and you will be personally surprised with the positive results.

There will be times when you will be blazing new trails in emergency management both for yourself and your team. There is also the chance it will be a new trail for your agency as a whole. Not much pressure, right?

Whenever an individual is faced with new and difficult challenges, some "experts" say we mentally revert to a past situation that comes close to mirroring our current problem and we base decisions and actions on that experience. It has been expressed in terms of each of us having a slide carousel in our brains with all past experiences cataloged as individual slides. When confronted with a new challenge, we mentally hurry through the carousel looking for a situation that comes close to what is in front of us and pull successful actions from the slide to rectify whatever we are facing. As you face new challenges while on your Incident Management Team assignments, you will be tapping into your private slide collection continually. Is it current and full?

One purpose of this essay is to hopefully add some slides to your carousel based on the experiences of past Incident Management Teams. It is doubtful that any "correct" answers will be provided; in fact, that won't even be attempted. And for very good reason.

Just as each emergency is different in demands it places upon you, your reaction to challenges presented during incidents will also be different. The fact something worked well for one but, quite possibly, will not for another is determined by each individual's perception of a problem, finding a solution that meets his/her individual needs and different methods of actually applying resolution. Just as importantly, some situations do not have "correct" responses.

Mistakes or errors will happen to all of us. Hopefully, you will not have to make some of those accomplished during past deployments. There are more than enough new ones out there to stumble through that you should not plow old ground others have explored. The intent of this essay is to demonstrate some of those past experiences and their lasting impacts.

This material is presented only for your consideration when confronted with a new challenge. Some of the items detailed have successfully met the need on past incidents. Some are thoughts about what should have been applied.

None of the material presented is to be construed as policy, procedures or regulations condoned by any agency. Only thoughts on methods, processes and directions drawn from past experiences are offered for your consideration. If you happen to develop a few new slides for yourself along the way, so much the better.

Team Make-up and Procedures

Some basic procedures are needed to streamline and codify team operations during times of emergency stress. By identifying certain performance standards prior to the crunching of time during an actual incident, all members will be able to react with less confusion and in a more professional manner. Some of the areas to consider are:

Written operating procedures. Different Incident Commanders (ICs) may expect different operations to be performed within a team setting. This is acceptable. However, team members scurrying around trying to figure out what and how to perform is not. IC's should take time to write out basic operating guidelines so members know what is expected.

How an IC expects the team to work. This will include meeting schedules and acceptable timeframes (i.e., planning meetings lasting no more than 30 minutes requiring everyone to be ready for the meeting). Also included are acceptable get- away times for a dispatch, communication procedures while responding, which team member(s) go to the responsible Emergency Command Center and retrieve what information, as well as other basic information on what an IC feels is necessary for the most professional performance by the team. Detailed directions could easily become over-kill. Team specific guidelines should be developed and endorsed by all team members. Buy-in is paramount.

Position specific expectations the IC has for all team members. We all know what position training delineates for each role; this reinforces and places additional specific responsibilities on a position. These types of expectations, when stated, give a person clear direction to meet. These can be as detailed as felt is necessary by an IC so that he/she is comfortable all areas of concern are clearly assigned to specific team personnel. It would be helpful if position expectations also included the IC's own role so that all personnel understand what that person sees as the primary responsibilities of his/her command position. Position statements should also include direction to those personnel the IC expects/requires written summaries from for inclusion into the team's Narrative Report.

Explanation and examples of Performance Rating that will be used by team members. It is highly recommended that each IC mandate a rating process for all team members as well as personnel who become assigned to an incident. Specific responsibilities delineated in team guidelines should be individual rating factors for the specific position.

Pre-Incident Communications. Intra-team communications are a key to a smooth operating group during an incident. ICs will find communications during incidents will flow smoother if members have routinely shared information prior to a deployment. An IC should take the lead in facilitating this flow. With the Internet electronic mail system, this could be as simple as messages to the team as information becomes available that could impact their performance during an incident. Developing a team phone list with all members' pertinent numbers including cell, pager and fax will greatly assist personnel with communicating.

One thrust of these communications is to keep all members apprised of changes and news but another is to develop the group into more than a collection of people. The word "team" comes to mind; the goal is best team interactions possible.

Continuing personnel development. Neither an IC nor the agencies can afford placement of personnel onto an Incident Management Team that are neither experienced enough or willing to perform at a high level during complex incidents. Reasons should be obvious. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all ICs to facilitate an environment within their respective teams that provides the best “hands-on” personnel development possible. After all, who is better suited to become the next major incident planning section chief than personnel who have repeatedly and successfully worked a unit-level position in a team setting within the planning section? Just being exposed to the dynamics of another position during an actual incident has to be some of the best training agencies can provide. This exposure should include development of selected personnel for the IC’s own role. Some ideas to consider:

- Other qualifications; e.g., situation unit leader also qualified as a food unit leader or finance section chief as a safety officer with accident investigation experience.
- Keep all allocated trainee positions full for each deployment. Each team member should strive to make a trainee assignment as meaningful as possible for participants. Once a trainee has demonstrated knowledge and abilities to perform that person should become eligible for placement onto an Incident Management Team and another person afforded the trainee slot to develop their skills.
- Assure that currently assigned personnel have all necessary position training for their position. Require new assignees to meet these standards.
- Become proactive in recommending advanced position training for those team personnel who successfully perform their positions and demonstrate abilities for future roles.
- Members become much more valuable when cross-trained in multiple functions. Knowledge of the other jobs is required.
- Have a “Team Building” atmosphere. Encourage the command and general staff to delegate responsibilities and authorities where appropriate. This will require the IC to do the same.
- Encourage/require functional leaders to “step-back” as incidents allow so that subordinates may perform as a well supervised “lead person ” (i.e., the situation unit leader becomes the acting planning section chief during stabilization/mop-up of an incident, etc.). Team members must consider “mentoring” as key important roles.
- Encourage team personnel involvement as instructors of training for those positions that they are qualified. A person naturally becomes more proficient when giving instructions than receiving them.
- Require performance ratings for all team members during activations. One theory of such ratings is to identify a person’s preparedness for advancement as well as identification of areas requiring improvement.

Post-incident critiques for team members only must be performed. This should become a standard team process. Identification of areas that went really well and those requiring improvement, what material items are necessary for the next activation and additional training requirements of members are but a few of the desired outcomes. Build towards an improved response for the next activation.

Professionalism. One goal all team members should strive to attain is bringing the highest level of professional management possible to an incident. This concept is difficult to define in that there are as many thoughts on what a "professional" management group is as there are people to ask. Clearly, your agency expects and has the right to accept nothing less than a group performing management tasks during an incident in a manner that will bring only highest respects from all observing persons. Some items to consider for developing a professional atmosphere:

- Team member's know their jobs, roles and required interactions. Obviously, this will entail all members to be position literate and also to understand what is needed to communicate and perform well within a team setting. Being literate of other functions will reinforce the timely and essential transfer of proper information. Written team guidelines further describe specific tasks, communications and relationships that are expected of them.

- Identification of team members. Any person around an incident, including those not attached but interested, should be able to easily identify the incident's management group by name and position. Rapid procurement of standard identification items; e.g., hats, name tags, vests, etc., must be done as new members come onto a team.

- Punctuality in all actions. If a planning meeting is set and advertised for a specific place and time, the meeting must begin at that time and place, regardless of who is missing. This will aid in setting the "tone" for all observed actions conducted by a team. It clearly tells all: "this group means to approach the profession of complex incident management in a businesslike manner". All other actions must also be punctual and purposeful. Routinely, a person will only be late for one such meeting if there is a standard method of recognizing tardiness.

- Team members are approachable and open to input. This sounds fairly simple but it is not an action always seen. The troops out on the lines have been there. Team members need to listen to what they have to say. One approach could be a directive announced during Operational Briefings that all persons assigned above a certain position (division/group supervisor, as an example) must report to a designated location upon relief for debriefing. However, if this is announced, someone from the management group must be at the location until all debriefings are received.

- Incident Action Plans (IAPs) are available to all that need them. Is it correct for a management group to determine a personnel below in a certain level of the organization (division/group supervisor, as an example) doesn't need one? Watch what happens when there is a serious accident and investigators ask survivors if they knew the overall plan of action or communications for the incident. If time or machines don't allow timely reproduction to meet this demand, posting copies of it allows anyone interested enough to review it.

- Timely and meaningful interaction with the responsible jurisdiction or agency: When invited, an Incident Management Team is a guest expected to perform a mission. By transferring information to the responsible jurisdiction throughout the incident, questions that always seem to arise after the fact should have been covered during the incident for those persons left with its aftermath. This communication will not be limited to the IC's position. Team members must consider themselves an "extension" of someone from the responsible jurisdiction; find out who this is and develop a rapport. This is the person(s) you want pleased at the end.

- Orderly and complete paperwork. Time records, documentation package, fiscal records, a team's Narrative Report are just a few written documents which will be available forever to tell history a team came, they conquered and they left. Make sure you go down in history correctly! Addition of internal audits and/or settlement of a cost apportionment only adds to the possibility your historical documentation will be received by a vast number of people. Don't let an excellent job performed under adverse conditions be judged later by substandard documentation.

- Visual presentations are used. Posting the current Incident Action Plan as well as the next operational period (when available), news from the world outside the incident, meeting schedules and required attendees are but a few to consider. How about posting directions to drop points, Medical Plan, and updated Safety Message, vehicle- parking directions, menu of the day, etc.? Think of visuals as a tool: a team does not have time to tell everyone on an incident everything but everyone is expected and wants to know everything. Assume they can read!

Transitioning

What is involved when transitioning an emergency incident to an Incident Management Team? Actual definition of the transition should be: "a process to familiarize a group of persons to a situation in progress as well as setting agency strategic priorities for its control." For an Incident Management Team, this situation is routinely some major complex emergency incident and this familiarization is to give real-time knowledge of the incident along with local operating procedures for the team. Pretty straightforward, right?

Think about the act of transitioning an incident to a team. It hasn't been a good day with all control actions working splendidly or you wouldn't be there. Not only is the incident not going well but also there could be tremendous amounts of property loss, injuries or deaths associated with it by the time the team arrives. You normally will be dealing with an agency administrator who may or may not have been part of the decision to activate your team and has an unfathomable amount of details and/or possible political pressures to deal with while wanting only one thing from this group, all who might be strangers: MAKE IT BETTER! All an Incident Management Team wants is all necessary pertinent information, official authority to perform their mission and to go to work; the faster the better. Obviously, if a transition isn't done efficiently, something important could easily be lost. Missed items at this point will be detrimental to the incident, impacting a team's efforts and recovering them could be difficult. A rapid transition could well be the worst action taken on an incident.

To avoid "dropping the ball," transitions should be approached in a clear and systematic manner that transfers the most information possible. Documentation of this transfer is required for later reference. These documents will become the cornerstone to an Incident Management Team's actions and written history of the incident.

Teams should also view the transitioning process as an opportunity to make that lasting "first impression" upon the responsible agency. Don't miss this opportunity.

So, with all the hazards identified, how is a transition done to minimize adverse impacts? Some issues to consider:

<u>An Agency Administrator Briefing to Incident Management Team or a similar transition form provides a good basis to transfer items proven necessary on past deployments</u>. The form's questions also require a responsible agency to contemplate items that might otherwise go by the wayside. Yearly review of this form's make-up should be undertaken by team ICs to incorporate new information items that have surfaced as needed on recent incidents.

- Most federal agencies use an Agency Administrator Briefing to Incident Management Team form or a similar version. States and other departments may have a different version of the form or no form at all. When responding to an activation, the IC may want to call the responsible agency to see if they use a transition form. If no transition form is used by the responsible incident jurisdiction the IC may suggest they consider using one and fax a copy, followed with confirmation it arrived. During these deployments, teams should expect the form to be incomplete and lacking a depth of information. It is not unusual for the IC/team and agency administrator to jointly fill out the form. This may require some education (for both parties) and negotiation. There could be instances where the form will not work at all. However, it can serve as a guide to develop some other mechanism of pertinent information transfer and documentation.

A formal transition takes place at a specified time and location with the completed form. Negotiation by an IC may be necessary on timing of this. A vast majority of team members need to be present for the transition. Travel times for some members could require transition to be delayed beyond a responsible agency's expectations. This will be especially true on incidents where agencies expect a team to assume command upon arrival of the first member. It will be incumbent upon the IC, with the agency administrator's assistance as necessary, to negotiate a realistic timeframe that allows proper personnel to arrive.

- The team should set a professional tone for the briefing by being punctual, identifiable, prepared and attentive.
- All team members should be in well-marked Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) or their agency's work uniform with issued team identification clearly displayed.
- Team members should form a group close to the agency speaker, command and general staffs to the front, with notepaper and, hopefully, a copy of the completed transition form available. If a completed form is not available, a blank form can serve as a guide for team members to generate questions pertaining to their specific roles. It is not unusual to have many people other than the Incident Management Team and key agency personnel present. Determine who everyone is and their role.
- An agency administrator briefing should start with introductions of the key agency personnel by name, title and incident function. Teams should introduce themselves by name and position.
- Routinely, the agency administrator conducts the briefing with an overview of the incident's history, projections, resources status and conditions. However, a team should be prepared to assist this effort.
- After the agency administrator briefing, the IC should negotiate a question period for team members to retrieve necessary information that might have not been dispensed. It may be best for the IC or planning section chief to facilitate this portion, going through team functions ("resource unit leader, any further questions? ", etc.). Team members need to be prepared with questions restricted to pertinent issues only.
- Prior to the briefing, the agency administrator and IC should have set an actual time for team actions to begin on the incident. This should be a portion of the briefing. If not mentioned, this will be one of the questions to bring out.
- Collect any written materials or displays presented to the team by the agency administrator, regardless of their value.

TIP! Team members should view the agency administrator briefing as the opportunity to make a lasting "first impression" on the requesting agency/jurisdiction. This could quite possibly be the first meeting the agency administrator has ever had with any member. As an old saying goes, "first impressions are lasting impressions." Take every opportunity to leave the impression that a first-rate professional management group is there to perform a required mission.

The Initial Attack Incident Commander (IAIC) will need to brief the team. The most current incident situation status should be available from this person and his/ her staff. Many times, this briefing is conducted concurrently with the agency administrator briefing. This has pluses and minuses but is normally something a team cannot control. Expected outcomes should be:

- The team will need the best incident information available, e.g., what has happened, what has been attempted, and any projections of incident size, resource status, locations and serviceability. Situation maps, weather forecasts, traffic maps, and Incident Briefing Form, ICS-201 if available, should be obtained.
- The team will need direction on future involvement of agency personnel currently on the incident. Do they stay to be incorporated into the incident's structure or are they to be released and when? This is decided between the agency administrator and IAIC.
- Teams can leave a lasting positive impression if a request is made to have a "local" person assigned to them for the purpose of local knowledge availability. Routinely, they will want the IAIC to stay assigned and available to the team. This person had the agency's trust to manage to this point; an assumption must be made he/she is the best available.

TIP! A word of caution: information from the IAIC could be less useful than one might believe. Some become withdrawn and "beat" because the incident escalated to the point of having to bring in a team. A lot of negativity could be present and this could sway a team without them even seeing the situation.

Team members must assemble as a unit for the purpose of affirming dispensed information and conduct a strategy meeting upon completion of the briefing.

- Confirmation of received information and materials should be done so that all team members start on the same footing. Just as everyone seems to hear an item differently, group knowledge could be disjointed. Do we all have the same information and, if not, where do we get differences ironed out? Take some time to confirm that what information you have is the same information everyone else has.
- Based on known status at the time, a general strategy for the team must be set to facilitate actions. This could be as simple as all functions checking on actions to this point that will affect their roles or it could be setting a time for the first planning meeting should the team be assuming immediate command.

A signed copy of the Delineation of Roles and Authorities – Administrator's Instructions (Delegation of Authority) should also be given an Incident Team, along with the Agency Administrator Briefing form. These documents clearly set team actions into motion. Roles and authorities become extremely important for team non-agency incidents as well as for non-wildland fire incidents (mobilization centers, etc.). Things to consider:

- When an Incident Management Team is requested immediate contact should be made by the Team IC with the agency administrator to explain the transitioning process including the Delegation of Authority. Remember, some jurisdictions don't routinely transition incidents to teams and this could easily be the first such occurrence. Any expectations that our routine will be known and smoothly take place could be severely shaken.

- Special attention should be taken when team activation is for an assignment other than assuming command of an incident. Team deployments that are intended to provide management for a part of an incident should trigger an alert to have very specific roles and authorities identified. As an example, during a major multi-county flooding incident, a team is deployed to manage the care and housing of evacuees only and will not participate in the overall management of response to the incident. A team would need their specific roles defined and a clear understanding of their authorities.

TIP! When response is to a non-wildland fire agency, an Incident Management Team will routinely find that requesting jurisdictions will not be familiar with the capabilities of what they have asked for. However, there is an expectation that a team will know all and the jurisdiction will normally be willing to participate in and provide anything the team suggests.

One of the best ways to demonstrate professional leadership during times of responses to another jurisdiction is to "walk" the jurisdiction through the Transition Briefing (w/form) and assist with the completion of the Delineation of Role and Authorities-Administrator's Instructions. Time taken at this first meeting will reap benefits throughout a deployment.

TIP! This is also time to determine if all of the jurisdiction's key personnel are involved with delegation to a team. There is nothing worse than to discover later that someone forgot to tell the county sheriff that an Incident Management Team is being brought in to manage a flood within the county. Not only is a sheriff the highest elected peace officer in the county, but he/she might not necessarily ascribe to the notion that assistance is needed at all. More importantly, they are usually armed! Count the noses and ascertain if all key folks are involved.

TIP! This may be the first, last and only opportunity to gather information before the team assumes an incident. Go slow. Be thorough. Try not to let key players get away before you have gotten all of your questions answered.

That First Operational Period

That first operational period faced by an Incident Management Team is a kaleidoscope of efforts. Each team function is furiously gathering, exchanging, and disseminating information, formulating plans and structuring their specific jobs with needed staffing. Initial/extended attack troops need relief and retrofitting, new line folks need to go out under direction, incident facilities need development, long- range planning begins and an in-depth view of all safety aspects of the incident is required. These and many other tasks must be undertaken beneath the pressures of interagency coordination and the ever watchful eye of media. Not much happening, right?

The state of the Incident Management Team is also a composite of effects.

Personnel are routinely working extended hours. They have hopefully gotten their direction and written authority after participating in a Transition Briefing. The incident's setting could be unfamiliar to them. Personnel currently working on the incident may have limited information. Resources and materials of all types are invariably still "en route". Mentally, the team knows what to do and desires to do it. Physically, frustration will set in when demands outdistance ability to supply.

Experience will assist in limiting this frustration. Once you've lived through a "first operational period," the next is taken in stride. Some details felt to be critical have proven to be less so. Shortages have been compensated for. Information lacks have become expected.

While it is not acceptable for a team to just throw their hands up in disgust, knowledge that an initial start-up of team operations could be a little rough should be learned. One of the strongest points of an experienced Incident Management Team is ability to recognize and adapt to situations thrown at them.

Professionally bringing control to chaos during a start-up is one of the brightest attributes and lasting impressions a team can impose on an incident. Some tools to consider for coping with this "first operational period" are:

- <u>Recognize and expect shortages</u>. Not resources, but information of <u>all</u> types will be in short supply. ETAs of ordered resources/supplies, situation reports or maps with little useful information, announcements of important person visits, accurate reports of resources currently assigned, timely reports of past injuries, losses or costs will all be among the missing. EXPECT THEM! Develop a sense of adaptation to work around them.

<u>Team Guidelines can lessen chaos</u>. Directions to specific functional roles to gather the best available information PRIOR to arriving can attempt to shortstop the "it's lost in the system" syndrome. Consider if time/travel allows:

- Directing a team "logistics" person to routinely go to the responsible agency dispatch center. Their mission is to:
    - ► Get copies of all agency documents utilized while gathering resources and supplies.

- ► Ascertain exact procedures and identification of contact person(s) for the continuation of ordering/confirmation with pertinent contact methods and numbers.

- Directing a team "planning" person to the responsible agency dispatch center. Their mission is to:

  - ► Retrieve copies of any agency incident situation and resource status documentation developed from the start of the incident.
  - ► Obtain copies of any news releases, incident cost calculations and weather forecasts/projections.
  - ► Get any information available concerning past incidents within the general area of the current one.
  - ► Determine exact procedures for situation updates and other dispatch contacts desired with contact person(s), methods and numbers.

- Assign a team "operations" person to personally recon the current situation. This may be done rather than attending the Transition Briefing as long as another operations representative is present for the briefing. Hands-on review of current strategies, resources and projections will greatly enhance a team's ability to produce a useful Incident Action Plan (IAP) when called upon to do so. Provide multiple briefings for "late" resources. If suppression resources are limited, continue to work on part of the incident where they will do the most good.

A pitfall all team members need to be aware of and recognize is the ease of working themselves beyond usefulness during the first operational period. Commonly members have been working at regular assignments when activated for a team response. Travel is conducted to the incident, a transition takes place and the team goes to work. A team routinely assumes an incident in time to brief and get the second day's operational period to the line. Work continues through day two to prepare facilities, accomplish planning and generally organize a large incident. Even if the incident does not enlarge significantly during day two, team members work all of that day to get their functions staffed and performing well.

Studies show that "burn out" occurs at about hour 11 when under stress. Efficiency, production, and safety become real concerns. Team functions require a mental state capable of simultaneously performing multiple tasks. Everyone has a point of diminishing return with regard to the ability to cope with demands placed upon them. Not only can a forgotten item become lost, personnel can be left in unsafe situations and needs go unmet. Team members can become exhausted without getting dirty. All members must recognize this fact.

Some items to consider for safeguarding against over-extension of team personnel:

- Team positions having a second person assigned will require a conscious division of workload. Team ICs may have to monitor this division to assure it is working. The person not "on" must attempt some rest in an effort to relieve his/her partner at the appropriate time.

- Use of twenty-four hour operational periods has proven to ease compression of time for some functions; i.e., logistics, planning and operations. Not that the workload goes away, only more time is available in an operational period to accomplish it.

- Team guidelines can require certain sections to have deputy positions filled whenever the crunch of an incident is expected to exceed a certain operational period (beyond the team's second).

Experience will teach to expect the unexpected. Being dependent on others will always leave the possibility of letdown. Ordering more assistance is not always an answer either. Availability, travel times or other incidents can severely impact accumulation of more staff. The best word of caution could be to have another plan available when chips don't all fall together.

A common practice during that now famous "first operational period" is a tendency to overestimate production. While this happens less in the Operations, others do fall prey. Our system builds this, i.e., the kitchen's ETA is 1100 hours and an unknown breakdown delays it until 1600 which impacts feeding of troops going out, etc. Overestimation can fell any team member in their quest to accomplish their function.

Teams should consider the possibility of overestimating their own production, especially during that first operational period. Is it really possible to draw together a current IAP, be working on the next and correctly look at contingency planning? Can necessary facilities be developed, communications organized and drop points marked with available staff? Can each member realistically accomplish all required actions within that "first operational period"?

Some items to consider:

- While developing Incident Objectives, ICS-202 for that first operational period, an IC could list specific objectives/goals for non- operations functions, e.g., logistics develop a 2,000 person camp; finance/administration assure all contracted equipment time is started, etc. This prioritizes actions and accomplishments. It also implies recognition of limited resources. A posted visual display of this could be helpful.

- Individual function heads must prioritize specific work to be accomplished. Functional staffing is routinely still short and only so many "things" can be accomplished; what is most "important"? List them and get them done in that order. Should an individual's priorities impact other team functions (and, THEY ALL WILL!) this must be shared with the other team members. A full team meeting four to five hours into that first operational period works excellent for this intra- team sharing of information about projected shortfalls and accomplishments.

- Recognize when the impossible just takes a little longer to accomplish. Most challenges faced by a team when organizing an incident can be successfully met in numerous ways. Be adaptive and creative while guarding against expending precious time on a scheme with marginal chances of success. A standard "book" answer is not always needed or required.

- Rely on past experiences (mental slides) to meet significant challenges. There is a depth of collective knowledge when an Incident Management Team is assembled. That first operational period team meeting could produce problem solving suggestions from a most unlikely source if members are made aware of a mate's difficulty and feel free to offer assistance. Use someone else's slide when necessary.

TIP! Learn to recognize the abilities of other team members. You could and should have cross-trained folks at your disposal. That information officer might also be an outstanding logistics section chief. The strongest attribute of real good management teams is an openness to share ideas and work. Too many times a person's focus becomes so narrow chasing their individual challenging demons that they forget that there are a lot of folks on a team, all with the common goal of making the entire production work. Share your needs and ideas. Each incident will impact each team member differently. That information officer might not have a lot to do on this incident due to its extremely remote location and, therefore, could be of assistance to logistics. At meetings have team members brain storm and prioritize what needs to be done. Encourage team members to help out where help is in short supply.

Communicating

During an Incident Management Team deployment, proficient communication becomes extremely important. This includes not only internal incident communications that utilize radios, phones and face-to-face to transmit information used towards control of an incident, but intra-team communications as well as off- incident transfer of information. Effectiveness of communications will directly impact a team's success and impression they leave behind.

Basically, communications can be broken down into three major categories:

- Intra-team
- Intra-incident
- External

Unsuccessful accomplishment of any category will impact a team and incident adversely. A variety of methods exist to avoid this.

<u>Intra-team communicating is the essence of team interaction and requires a conscious effort by all members</u>. It is not that people are excessively introverted but, some do find it extremely difficult to share thoughts and ideas before a group. Some avenues to consider:

- Sincerely welcome new members to the team.
- Efforts must be expended to maintain an intra-team atmosphere that advocates smooth and healthy communications. This is easier said than done. Many obstacles can lead a member to be reluctant to participate:
  - ► Agency affiliation: Some team members may be hesitant to actively participate in open team communications until it becomes obvious their input is welcome and, yes, needed. Personal discussions with the IC or other team members could help; it may take repeated team interfacing for a person to loosen up enough to participate. All team members need to be aware of this situation and ready to rectify it.
  - ► Rank: Unfortunately, some folks will hesitate to participate because they are outranked. An IC should make it crystal clear that, in a team setting, all collar brass was checked at the door; every member is just that a member! Your only "rank" is that afforded to your team position. Again, this may take repeated demonstration by all team members to loosen up the rank consciousness.
  - ► Abilities: A person might be self-conscious of what they perceive as a lack of experience or knowledge compared to other team members, subscribing to the theory of not demonstrating this lack by opening their mouths. Again, the team atmosphere will need to recognize that there are as many different levels of experience as there are members and that's OK. Besides, those with loads of experience had to start somewhere too.
- Team guidelines can describe and structure team operations in a manner that clearly requires and promotes communication's importance to team intra-actions.

Team structure requires numerous meetings
Transition Briefing
Strategy Meeting
Planning Meeting(s)
Operational Briefing(s)
Daily Team Meeting(s)
Demobilization Planning
Meeting Transition Out Briefing
Post Incident Team Meeting (critique)

- ► It would be advantageous to discuss meeting processes in team guidelines. Expectations on length, contents, participants, and required interactions as well as need for documentation should be explained.
- ► Continually drive home the idea that gathering, exchanging and disseminating information is a <u>shared</u> responsibility of <u>all</u> team members. Assure a clear process to accomplish this is understood and expected of and by all.
- ► Position specific expectations within team guidelines could list those types of information required by team members. This alerts members to the nature and detail each other member expects from them.
- ► Team ICs and functional section chiefs should monitor conduct of meetings and member's participation to assure an open working atmosphere is cultivated and maintained.

TIP! Meetings by team members coordinate a vast majority of team management efforts. They are required <u>BUT,</u> the abundance of them can become overwhelming for personnel attempting to accomplish something (such as managing an emergency). A watchful eye should track all meetings to eliminate unproductive or counterproductive time. Having a clear posted agenda with outcome expectation, along with member's knowledge of the expectation of their punctuality and preparedness, should maintain the businesslike team attitude. A team member assigned as the team's meeting facilitator (team guidelines) or "Sergeant-at-Arms" could also help. Leave the rabbits for after the incident. Every team meeting should start with, "the purpose of this meeting is ______". The following people must be present ______, ______, ______, ______.

TIP! Teams should develop a standard procedure for documenting all meetings. Too many key decisions and directions develop during meetings that seem to require later review. Bring in a scribe or delegate this task via team guidelines.

<u>Intra-Incident communications are obviously key to transferring information for the purpose of control</u>. However, even as much as this type of communicating is performed by our troops day-to-day, there are areas for improvement during major incidents.

- Keep the incident's troops informed. We have all been on incidents where no one outside of the incident management's upper echelon had any idea what was going on or projected. Really makes you feel that there was a rudder on those ships, huh? Routinely updated bulletin boards and single page briefings within the base are but two of the ways to accomplish the task of informing the troops. Decide early how and by whom this will be accomplished, then make it happen. Utilize visual displays within the ICP as much as possible. If someone can locate their needed information without asking, a manager's time is not spent answering questions.

TIP! Each team should have some pre-developed "standard" documents available from personal word processing systems that can be used as needed. Motel policies, personnel standards of conduct, and release priorities are but a few of the documents consistently used incident-to-incident. Teams will develop more upon each activation. Availability will assure use.

- An IAP that cannot be read is less than worthless. Its construction wasted a lot of valuable time and, except for meeting certain personal needs in a biological sense, it isn't worth carrying. Recognize that IAPs must be reproduced; reproduction requires a clean original. At present, the cleanest way to develop an IAP worthy of reproducing is to employ the InciNet and other computer systems. Get one and use it! To meet the need prior to the system's arrival, copies of this program are available for personal computers (laptops) which should be in every planning section chief's possession. If an IAP must be handwritten, find someone who can write legibly and produce the best IAP possible. IAP maps are also a problem to reproduce; the GIS mapping system cranks out great maps in 8-1/2 x 11 inch format that can be reproduced with outstanding results. Use it!

- As a communications plan develops, assure all pertinent information is on each Assignment List, ICS-204 of the IAP as well as the Communication Plan, ICS-217. Complex incidents require complex communication plans. The Assignment List, ICS-204 reflects the Communications Plan specific only to the assignment of resources to that division/group. However, reassignment of personnel about the incident during an operational period affords everyone information needed to properly communicate. Likewise, LCES information developed should also be on each specific Assignment List, ICS-204 for the same reasons. Build in flexibility while keeping troops informed.

- Each IAP should include a listing of staff cell phone numbers. Begin building a cell phone/pager directory early and update it with every new IAP. Teams should have one started in their portable word processor prior to activation. In areas with adequate cell phone coverage (or made to have adequate coverage when you brought in that portable cell), radio traffic will be freed up for important operations-based communications. Use the radio for operations messages so that others can eavesdrop.

- Operations leaders (chiefs, directors, supervisors and leaders) must be cognizant that certain communications should NOT be conducted via cell phone. It is entirely possible to isolate a large segment of an incident's organization by not using common communications methods for information needed by many. For instance, if one division had a blow-up condition and reported this via phone only, would adjacent divisions (or anyone else on the incident) have all information necessary to them? Certain items need to be heard via common communication methods.

- Operations leaders and incident dispatchers need to maintain radio discipline on the incident. Not only will this eliminate untimely use of congested airwaves, it should maintain a professional sounding incident for all those listening (like an agency administrator or the media).

TIP! In areas of highly concentrated cellular telephone coverage (heavily populated or with major transportation routes) cellular companies have portable cells as well as large numbers of portable phones available. FCC licensing for these high use areas normally contains a clause that requires companies to provide this service to responders without cost (including the cost of the calls made) during times of disasters. Check with your logistics folks to assure they know how to access this service when needed.

<u>External communications are those made from the incident to the outside world</u>. This will include, but not be limited to, briefing the agency administrator, working with the agency dispatch center, tracking down vendors for specialized items, or transmitting cost information to an appropriate source. These and many other communications will say volumes to legions about the team and its personnel. Therefore, team members need to be aware of the expectation that all communicating will be of the highest professional level. Some items to consider:

- The most off-incident reviewed and discussed document a team will produce during a deployment is the Incident Status Summary, ICS- 209. Accept this fact. Completeness, accuracy and timeliness are paramount. There are deadlines for the ICS-209 that must be met as this document is used to allocate resources to your incident. It must be on time.

TIP! There are currently many documents required to be transmitted off an incident throughout its life. ICS-209s and cost estimates are but a couple. Assure you know them all. Reconfirm early during the incident with the receiver a timetable and method to be used for each. Entirely too much time can be wasted by too many people tracking down late or incomplete documents.

- Agency administrator briefing times and methods will normally be set during the Transition Briefing. The IC or deputy will routinely do these. Regardless who does them, reviewing the latest intelligence just prior to the event will allow transmission of the best information while making a professional presentation. Agency administrators want the best “feel” for the incident that the experience of a team can give him/ her. Being forthright and honest can ease the making of off- incident decisions.

TIP! Awareness of the importance that is to be given external communication by all team members will go a long way to having the team perceived as a structured and accomplished group who can meet deadlines in a professional manner while facing many difficult tasks.

TIP! Some have found that local Internet providers have been known to provide access for use of an incident free of charge. Check on it if this could be of value.

So you're in Unified Command Now What?

It is common for significant incidents to involve more than a single jurisdiction. This is an accepted fact and management of these types of incidents has been addressed under the Incident Command System's provision of Unified Command. What impacts can an Incident Management Team expect under Unified Command? What are some of the pitfalls and what are some "tricks" to making it work?

When transitioning into an incident which is being managed under Unified Command, some immediate alert bells should loudly sound.

Is this legitimately a Unified Command Incident? Unified Command was designed to "allow all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either geographical or functional, to manage an incident." Do you have such an incident? If not clearly understood, ask your agency administrator for clarification. You need to know when an agency is including (or pacifying) a cooperator in Unified Command when in reality the cooperator has no jurisdiction or functional responsibility for the incident.

Has a single ordering point been established? The quickest and longest lasting way to adversely impact a Unified Command incident is to have involved agencies continue processing orders for additional resources/supplies through their normal channels. Incident personnel delegated as having overall incident responsibility for their agency (Incident Commanders) must immediately agree what method (single point) will be used for such ordering, advise their respective agency, and assure all incident personnel from their agency know of and abide by this decision.

Is this a cost share incident? This will be a tough topic to broach. However, it is one that needs an immediate answer. Some agencies do cost sharing as a matter of policy; others will not have a clue what this is about. With "...responsibility for the incident..." should come some expectation of financial support for that responsibility. Impasse on this subject must be referred to your agency administrator immediately. If there is to be a cost share of the incident, some tools are necessary:

- Have cost share technicians been ordered? Very seldom will personnel from the team's finance/administration section have time or expertise required to produce an agreement necessary for cost sharing. Get the help you need. A technician should represent each agency involved.
- Do you have on-hand necessary maps accurately delineating each agency's area of responsibility? If not, get them. If you are not intimately familiar with the areas, have your agency administrator or a designee verify the map's accuracy. This is important!

OK, so all of the immediate bells went off and you got satisfactory answers to the first issues. Now what? To proceed smoothly, some preliminary actions, which are different from a single agency incident, are necessary.

- Establish Unified Command's objectives for the incident that meet all involved agencies' needs. This could be understood as necessary by your counterparts or it could be an entirely new concept. Availability of a blank Incident Objectives, ICS-202 form could aid in this effort. Keep the development clearly as objectives, not tactical actions. Good luck!

- Establish the management staff who will fill "lead" section chief and officer roles. A team IC can be intimidating here as he/she just showed up with a whole fleet of highly regarded personnel who normally operate as a high performance team. Should all agencies elect to use the Incident Management Team intact, this job is done. However, should another agency feel it is necessary to insert staff from their agency into the management structure, things can become a little more complicated, but there are a couple of avenues to consider:

- Keep the bulk of the Incident Management Team intact as "lead" person in each function while negotiating for a limited number of "deputy" roles for other team members. Normally emphasis will be for another agency's person in an operations section chief role. Can your team function correctly if the team operations section chief becomes a deputy? This will be a question each team IC will have to answer for themselves and their team. Make sure your agency administrator reviews any negotiated staffing settlement.

- Should qualified personnel from another agency be available to fill all "lead" roles, your entire Incident Management Team could become deputies. This will need to be immediately reviewed with your agency administrator; he/she might not have brought you in with this in mind. The issue is thrown back to the administrators from all involved agencies for settlement. It's not the best avenue for a team, but it could be the only way to settle it.

- Establish information release procedures for the incident. All agencies on the incident will need to agree to a single source for development of information released. The information section may well have personnel from all involved agencies, but released stories must all be the same. This can become the second leading source of problems within a Unified Command setting if left to chance.

- Agreement on incident facilities, location, purpose and size must be mutual.

The ICs come out of their meeting and announce the outcome of their agreements. Now what? All team members need to consider some thoughts:

- Regardless if the Incident Management Team is to be the "lead" group or if the team is the only command structure present save the other agency(s) ICs; team attitude will set an everlasting tone for the incident. There is a new player in the position of leader; could there be several? Now what? Team intra-actions must continue as normal. React equally to all ICs. This is easier said than done with some. There will be some agency specific needs which might have to be met by staff. While just what they need is more to do, these are the "little" things which could derail a Unified Command with the best intentions. Any questions concerning conflicts of direction should be immediately referred to the team IC for rectification. All team members must want the other agency

IC(s) to say after the incident that "the team took me in and accepted me as a full member."

- Be open and honest with your counterparts. Whatever command structure agreed to will have to work and work well. The attitude and cooperation by the Incident Management Team cannot become a basis for problems.

- Realize that you may be training your counterpart in his/her functional role. Incident Management Teams have qualified and experienced personnel assigned; other agencies may find it hard to match up person-for-person. All team members should expect being relied on to pass along some of this hard earned experience. It can become a full time task. Remember, you may well be developing a future member of your team.

- Remain approachable and open to input. For many of the same reasons as providing on-scene training to counterparts, team members must demonstrate untiring desire for input and interaction. By setting an example of cooperation, a team will stimulate and maintain a desire in all to work together in a common cause.

- With minor exceptions, all management functions must be collocated. This includes the Incident Command Post (ICP). We have all been on incidents that clearly had multiple ICPs, yet were called "Unified Command." Not True. Get it together and assist keeping it together.

A few hard earned thoughts which could make future Unified Command incidents easier for a team:

- Establish agency specific finance/administration personnel within this section. This may only need to be a deputy to the section chief, but assures proper procedures and documentation is followed for each agency.

- Establish agency specific time recorders within the incident's finance/ administration section. These people work and report to the finance/ administration section chief. However, specific time recording requirements of each agency will be met.

- Establish agency specific compensation/claims personnel within the finance/administration section. Depending on which agency's jurisdiction a claim might generate from, the process for submitting claims could be different. By having a person from that agency handle the claim from the start, settlement delays will be avoided. Again, these people would work for and report to the finance/administration section chief.

- Should you be involved in a cost share agreement, consider:

    - ► A division-by-division percentage split is required for each operational period of the incident. This assigning of percentages is done by the ICs. Whenever ICs do this, it should be done in private with the cost share technicians, only. Too much pressure is implied to an IC if someone from his/her agency is present/observing; especially a superior.

    - ► Operations section chiefs have an important and pivotal role in cost share agreements. They will be required to verify, at the end of each operational period, where each resource was actually used during that operational period. This should be made known early so they may employ whatever means necessary to track resource use. Should there be air resources involved; air operation branch directors will be required to do the same. Tell them.

Some Other Things to Consider

Some issues have arisen over the course of past Incident Management Team deployments that warrant consideration, should there be a need for slide development by you. Something similar could surface again:

Two agencies each have an Incident Management Team assigned to an incident. Complicated? Yes. Impossible? Not necessarily. Think about:

- An incident is large enough geographically to require excessive travel times to encircle. While not specifically outlined in ICS, splitting a large incident into two separate areas/zones with clearly defined boundaries can work. However, there can only be one set of incident objectives! Objectives are negotiated between two zones so all needs are met. Although workable, this is not an ideal situation to be in. This setup really calls for an Area Command to be established to coordinate two efforts and prioritize resource usage.
- Agency administrators jointly negotiate that one team will be primary or lead and the other will perform as deputies. Hopefully, team ICs would be consulted on workability of such an arrangement. This is the second best alternative.
- One team works one operational period, the other works the following. This is not good. There is too much loss of command continuity as well as too great of a chance for details to "fall through the cracks." Stay away from this if at all possible.
- One team is released from the incident at the direction of the agency administrators. This is the best solution and reduces a wasteful commitment of resources.

Your position on a statewide priority list during a time of multiple incidents is very low. Resources (especially those of a normally limited nature) are going to be very few and far between. Expect over-using the resources you do have and long delays on orders. Even items like the Incident Base will be limited at times. Plan accordingly. Your creativeness and flexibility will be tested. DO NOT resort to hedging reports of your situation should nothing current or predicted exist which could change your priority. These embellishments seldom work as you hope. Live through it and see how the team's collective imagination produces results. After all, some incident has to be on the bottom of the list; it's just your turn. Consider using nontraditional approaches such as large numbers of rental dozers; making local government engine crews into a fire crew, etc.

You have a significant incident near a major center which attracts a lot of attention. The team's information section is doing a good job; however, expect repeated requests to interview the IC. In today's world, the media eventually want and need to hear from "the person in-charge." Consider an organized news conference to fulfill this demand. Advertise a conference time which will meet a majority of deadlines of the media present, find an area of adequate size, get good visual aids, brief the presenter(s) on the latest status/possible question areas and do it.

Reporters from most major media sources understand this format and process. However, the team's information officer should facilitate the conference by opening with an explanation that there will be a situation overview and a question/answer period; all to be accomplished within a set timeframe. The information officer should be ready to "rescue" the IC(s), if necessary.

<u>You have an incident with a significant number of structures destroyed.</u> Lucky you! While firefighters did their best, the incident "took" xxx number of structures. Now what? Consider:

- Specific instructions to the entire information section should be: their theme is to be; "firemen SAVED xxx (number) of structures, unfortunately, the fire DESTROYED xxx (number). . . Firemen DO NOT lose structures; we save them!
- You will need to organize a triage group to rapidly count foundations. Media want a number and will harass the information section until given one or will develop their own from any talking source around the incident.
- Determine as soon as practical the identification of those structures destroyed. Addresses, assessors plot maps or anything else, which will positively locate the structures, will aid in this. Assuming the area has been evacuated and residents have not been allowed back due to on-going control activities, you can set in place some processes to ease this situation for the citizens involved.
- As soon as operations can work around limited traffic, announce availability for firefighter-escorted trips during specified times for owners of known destroyed structures. Proof of residency should be required.
- Have agency vans or other suitably marked agency transportation available. Assign compassionate agency fire personnel in uniform with PPE to function as escorts. Outfit the affected citizens in well-marked PPE. Take them to their structure. Reason; too many experiences with this situation have shown that people, even though it is confirmed for them that their structure is destroyed, <u>HAVE to visit the site for personal closure</u>. When performed correctly, this service will generate rave reviews and leave a lasting impression.
- Discuss this sort of action with a local mental health department or other appropriate agency prior to implementation. They routinely have excellent suggestions and counselors available for this type of traumatic undertaking.
- Consider having Advanced Life Support available during such an operation. This has proven worth the effort as reaction to individual trauma can be overwhelming for some; plan for it.
- The media will want to record these returns for human interest. You cannot stop them unless they are considered a hazard to on- going operations (difficult to do if you are taking citizens in). Information could have them elect a representative to travel with the escorts/ victims in your vans to get a story that they will share. Or, selected victims amenable to media attention could provide this coverage. Check on it. Also, check those that aren't and protect them.

- You have a need for damage assessment for structures destroyed. Place an order for this specialized resource when you have some idea of numbers. It could take a while to assemble the necessary staff to do the job correctly. Consider tapping the county assessor and/or building departments for resources necessary to perform assessments; they have methods we don't, familiarity with what is an inhabitable structure, and resources (plot maps, etc.) which could speed the process. Know what you want from damage assessment; count, photos, prevention information, etc.

<u>You have to recommend evacuation of citizens from the incident.</u> Alert bells should be loudly sounding now. Consider:

- We don't order evacuations; this is a law enforcement function and they have the responsibility. However, they don't have knowledge of incident spread that you do and will be relying on you to trigger the need.
- Get the highest ranking responsible law enforcement agency official you can. Install him/her into your command structure as a "branch director law enforcement" (put the name on the organization chart quickly). Responsibilities are evacuation, traffic control and security as well as their routine duties. Make this person feel a part of the incident's organization by involvement throughout your planning process and IAP implementation. Make sure this person understands you consider him/her as the law enforcement head for the incident that is working within your structure.
- Bring in the county emergency services coordinator (or someone with these responsibilities; different titles exist). This person has (or should have) pre-planned evacuation centers located, contacts with appropriate social response organizations (Red Cross, etc.) and mass transportation contacts. Develop an appropriate level within your organization for this person and delegate necessary responsibilities. This will be fairly easy in those locations with an active disaster planning effort. It is likely an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be established.
- If evacuees are placed into incident generated shelters, have your information section place a team information officer into each shelter. Evacuees will need periodical updates of the current and projected situation. A uniformed person from your staff is best.
- Negotiate early with your law enforcement branch director procedures to be followed once your situation allows reoccupation of the area. Make sure all staff knows how this will be announced and what preparatory steps are needed. Law enforcement makes the actual evacuation; they should announce and coordinate reentry.
- There can be pressure (even unvoiced pressure developed within the team) to get people back into their residences as soon as possible. Guard against inhibiting operation's efforts and/or possibly needing to evacuate again (very bad)! Human nature will want to get folks back in quickly; just don't make it too fast. By the same token don't delay unnecessarily. The occupant can help the operation by being present.

A community relation is a broad term for efforts to meet the need of local citizens and elected officials to be informed/involved with your emergency mitigation job. This is an unexplained, but inherent mission each management group has and one the fire service as a whole has never done well. Consider the following:

- Your incident is burning or seriously threatening to burn (or flood, or...) within a community. Citizens have a right and expectation to be informed BY THEIR FIREFIGHTERS what is happening and being done versus getting this information from the media or word of mouth. One avenue is to organize public briefings within the affected community.
- Coordinate any of these efforts with local elected official (city council person or board of supervisors for the affected area). They need to be afforded the opportunity to be present and/or participate with these briefings.
- Depending on the incident's magnitude or "feel" for community concern, the first such briefing within specific areas might need to be done by the IC(s) with assistance from your information section. Repeat briefings at a location can be delegated to information if this is felt to be appropriate.
- Daily updated single page informational handouts developed by Information and dispersed from places of community gathering and with IAPs are generally well received. Announce in the last one to be published that future issues will not be done.
- Long-term or damaging incidents will generate a lot of interest by elected officials. You have a responsibility to brief them also. Consider the following:
  - ► Make sure firefighters themselves know the big picture and can provide accurate information to the public, the media, and officials.
  - ► Check with an appropriate source to determine if the entire group of community elected officials (city council/board of supervisors) would entertain a briefing during a public comment section of their organized agenda. This assumes their regular meeting day would be of benefit (incident is still active). Recommend the IC(s) make these presentations.
    - ▪ Visual displays will greatly assist in such presentations.
    - ▪ Don't get too technical. These are laypersons, not firefighters. They will be most interested in damages done, projections for control and problems encountered.
    - ▪ If you are unfortunate enough to have an incident that remains active through another scheduled meeting, see if they would like an update briefing.
  - ► Invite the elected official(s) to attend your Planning Meetings and Operational Briefings. We do not operate in secrecy; invite them and assign a knowledgeable staff to escort them through the processes. If they do attend, announce their presence to the group so your folks know who is in the room.
  - ► If you have a final package of incident maps, damage assessments, rehab plans,

team narrative report and the like, have enough packages developed for presentation to the elected officials who have interfaced with you during the incident.

TIP! View the need to meet expectations of citizens and elected officials in the context of; these are your "customers." We have a responsibility to meet the expectations of our customers. DO IT! This might all seem to be a real waste of the team's valuable time, but we do have a responsibility to keep citizens/elected officials informed. The benefits of expanding this effort will be generally well rewarded. Agency folks left behind after a team mitigates the incident will enjoy an improved respect for the fire service.

Very Important Persons (VIPs) Visits. Incident visits by interested important people will happen. VIPs could be just about anyone; politicians, government department heads, etc. Be prepared for them! Some will be invited, some will appear unannounced. Regardless, teams should have internal procedures in-place and known by all members to deal with these important visitors (team guidelines?). Consider the following:

- A team function is designated as responsible for VIPs. Routinely, this falls to information. It really doesn't matter who, just so long as there is a function responsible and staffed to handle these folks. The goal is to brief the VIPs on the incident's history, what is projected and what problems exist. Visual aids in a briefing area will make this much easier. Dependent upon the visitor, ICs may be expected to make this presentation.
- Tour incident developed facilities with VIPs. Without disturbing work being conducted, orientations to the planning section's efforts will usually amaze folks seeing this activity for the first time. The same is true with the finance section. Of course, a tour of facilities isn't complete without trying the kitchen.
- Requests for tours to the front lines can be expected. If practical, go with appropriately marked PPE and in agency marked vehicles. Expect and plan for over-flight requests; these are appropriate when correctly licensed aircraft are available and such movement does not interfere with operations.
- Upon their departure, ask if a follow-up personal briefing is of value for them. A simple phone number exchange will allow rapid transfer of information to them and could limit return visits.

Accountability is an often discussed and noble issue, but one which is difficult to see results with. In a team setting, accountability has to start with the team. Team guidelines have laid out specific expectations; did they get met? Your agency administrator laid out expectations (strategic goals/objectives) for the team; did they get met? Section chiefs laid out expectations for their subordinates; did they get met? How do you know? We historically have done poorly when recording job performance with proper documentation. Be a part of a force to change this trend!

- Team members with written guidelines know what is expected of them. Performance ratings should have these expectations incorporated as rating factors. If met, say so. If not, explain why performance was less than adequate. Improvement for a next deployment is the goal.

- Routinely, agency administrators will be very satisfied with a team's performance when the incident is successfully controlled. Sometimes, to the point of embarrassment. However, do they really review your documentation, ask for final cost figures, demand reviews of accidents/injuries or feel free to discuss on-going political problems in an incident's aftermath? No, but these are the issues that administrators deal with. As a last professional gesture, what would an administrator do with a performance rating sheet listing these types of issues handed to him/her by an IC? It might be worth doing just that to watch their expression. If you get one honestly filled out, it will make a great learning tool for the entire team.

- Section heads must feel it's an obligation of their position to honestly rate subordinates. The team should decide early (in their guidelines) to what level of the organization performance ratings would be required. Once done, make the forms available and <u>have a central location staffed for their collection</u>. Distribute off the incident under direction of agency policy or the agency administrator.

<u>Substandard or non-performance is not a frequent occurrence, but one that will need to be faced.</u> If performance impacts the incident detrimentally; release and send them home. Follow with immediate contact to their home supervisor advising of the situation and reason for early return. Follow it with written documentation. Include all pertinent facts. You had better be right as this is about the biggest action you can take against a professional and one that may take follow-up action after the incident. But hey, that's what you get the big money and title for.

TIP! Personnel problems must be referred to the IC immediately. Some tough decisions have to be made. Is the transgression or act sufficient to warrant future punitive action? If so, recommendation is that a specific investigator for the occurrence be requested. Current personnel assigned to the incident already have a job and/or might not have expertise to perform and document a needed investigation properly. Get specialized help when needed.

TIP! Teams should have base/camp rules of conduct available in their portable word processing. This will need to detail acceptable/unacceptable conduct and attire for personnel to adhere to. Post on bulletin boards and include in IAPs as deemed appropriate. Then BACK IT UP!

Your incident has numerous resources from the state's Mutual Aid System assigned. A common situation but one that does have implications associated with it.

- Require a conscious and periodical review by operations on the effectiveness and value of these resources. On many occasions, we can look back and confidently say these resources were held too long. These have, at times, become a security blanket in case "something goes wrong". In many cases, their true value ended 24 hours previously. Monitor.

- Why do we continue to associate "structure protection" needs with Type I engines? In many locations, these monsters have limited applications. Nearly as many Type II and III engines are available through the system and these lend themselves better for many more applications. Think about it when ordering.

- When you have enough advance knowledge of need, request those state-owned engines available through the system. They are cheaper and have adequate capabilities for most applications. Response times can normally be the limiting factor.

- Demobilizing a large collection of mutual aid resources can become a nightmare. Plan early and staff up. The vehicle safety inspection portion takes a while.

<u>You have stabilized the incident and begin planning for demobilization.</u> As the primary thrust to accumulate resources was driven by operation's needs, this section has primary responsibility to generate information on their future needs and scale-back of the incident. One tool to assist in this "crystal ball" projecting is a matrix developed by operations. The matrix lists different types of resources to be used, each operational period out for a minimum of three days and projected needs of each type of resource for each subsequent operational period. Operations should review this matrix often. With exception of the following operational period, numbers can be modified as each operational period completes their assignment and the needs change up or down. Armed with this type of information, the team can begin demobilization planning and proceed. Plan early, review often and demobilize resources that are not needed.

What's Coming Your Way Next?

What is on the horizon for Incident Management Teams? Who knows. However, if recent deployments are an indicator of the future, things will be interesting. New challenges exist and possible assignments for situations yet unknown surely will test skills of current and future team members.

The adoption of the Standard Emergency Management System (SEMS) guidelines by the State of California could impact teams deployed to that state. Incident management and coordination have been given new emphasis. Availability of trained/experienced Incident Management Teams is becoming known by many jurisdictions that previously had very little knowledge of or exercise in emergency management. Most are attempting to train and learn a system that will routinely be exercised annually or when "the big one" hits. Many have already demonstrated and acknowledged limited ability to function proficiently due to a lack of continuous application of these skills. With these specialized skills available on demand, many jurisdictions will look to Incident Management Teams to fill their occasional needs. What will this entail?

<u>New types of incidents will need to be managed</u>. Large scale HazMat, civil disturbances, earthquakes, floods and, yes, an occasional tsunami will all impact California and possibly other locations. Who knows what other calamity will jolt nature's playground for disasters. However, all will require massive amounts of resources for mitigation. Will managing these effectively be that much different than a wildland fire? No, only the actual application of these resource's skills will be somewhat different. In other words, effectively dealing with large numbers is not any bigger deal than what we routinely do; only the application will differ. What can a team expect? Consider:

- Teams will not normally have knowledge or training in many areas needed; dealing with large numbers of displaced citizens (both short and long-term), addressing water and air pollution concerns on a large scale, restoring basics of life needed to survive like emergency drinking water systems and food as well as many other aspects. What to do?
- Get the most knowledgeable technical specialist for areas where the corporate knowledge of the team is lacking; just like on a wildland fire incident. Then listen to them!
- Develop interpersonal skills that will be necessary to coordinate and interact with personnel from many diverse agencies and jurisdictions. This is not as easily accomplished as you might think. You will have inherent problems with some because of the "what do a bunch of wildland firefighters know" syndrome. Show them!
- You will not have that warm fuzzy feeling that you have done this particular type of incident a hundred times to fall back on. However, you will have tested emergency management skills exceeding those around you. Use them!
- Expenditure of dollars will be a nagging hindrance to feeling free to accomplish what is needed. "Where is all of this money coming from" will become a steady nightmare.
- Pressure to perform without a hitch will be ever present. This could be voiced or personally felt by individual team members. Effects might become overwhelming. Teams should discuss this and recognize its symptoms.

- Possible concerns for team member's personal property and family could surface. Were member's residences within an affected area? Deal with this straight away.
- Teams need awareness of, but avoid, intra and interagency political wars. Our presence at non-wildland fire incidents will incite some while soothing others. Regardless, you have a job to do; just do it and leave the infighting to the real wheels. With new types of incidents will come new types of assignments.
- You might not be in charge of the big picture; a portion or role could have been delegated, e.g., managing the receipt and distribution of relief supplies, restoration of water supplies, etc. You could be working for another management organization (team) on a portion of the overall incident that may or may not be experienced/ knowledgeable. Expect it.

With expansion of emergency response coordination and management under SEMS legislation, comes the requirement for Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs) at various levels of government. Training continues for personnel for EOC staffing.

A problem with this system is that a majority of the personnel will perform these EOC duties as an additional responsibility to their normal job. Many have only limited knowledge of performing in an emergency response mode. Fewer have actually performed on emergency incidents. Obviously, many agencies will look toward Incident Management Teams for assistance based on known capabilities and input from their counterparts throughout the states.

Many jurisdictions and various levels of government have already discovered the abilities and availability of Incident Management Teams. This knowledge is being shared and expanded within those circles. What will a team face while filling a request to function within an EOC?

- A clear delegation of roles and authorities will be required. This should be a must even if the team has to assist in developing them (and you should/will). You could be operating in an arena without benefit of legal backing; may not be legislated to do some of the roles as expected on wildland fires. Get your delegation right and in enough detail to cover you and the agencies you represent.
- A team could be delegated to act as the sole management representative of the responsible jurisdiction. Delegation would need to be very specific and complete. Ramifications from an indiscriminate delegation could become monumental. This could equate to being delegated responsibility for a fire emergency.
- A team could be requested to perform as "shadows" or deputies within an EOC with responsible jurisdiction personnel filling all "lead" roles. The easiest way to visualize this scenario is a team would be performing a "training" mission of walking the other personnel through the para-military organization of ICS and developing team building skills of the personnel. True delegation of authority would never leave the jurisdiction, but a team will need clear definition of their expected role.
- A team could be delegated portion(s) of large incidents to manage. Again, very specific delegations would need to be documented.