CHAPTER 3
Managing the Incident:
Problems, Pitfalls, and Solutions
Learning Objectives Overview

- Knowledge Objectives
- Skills Objectives
Introduction

• Direct and effective command and control operations

• Hazardous materials incidents place a special burden on the command system
  – Often involves communications among separate agencies
  – Coordination of many different functions and personnel assignments
Managing the Incident: The Players

Hazardous materials incidents can bring many different players and agencies to the scene.
Managing the Incident: The Players (2 of 5)

- A hazmat incident requires different skill sets.
- Each response discipline brings its own:
  - Agendas
  - Organizational structures
  - Priorities
Managing the Incident: The Players (3 of 5)

• The basic ICS organization includes:
  – The incident commander
  – Unified commanders
  – ICS general staff
  – ICS command staff
Managing the Incident: The Players (4 of 5)

• ICS players:
  – Fire/rescue/EMS companies
  – Law enforcement officers
  – Emergency response team
  – Hazardous materials response teams
  – Special operations teams
Managing the Incident: The Players (5 of 5)

• ICS players (cont’d):
  – Facility managers
  – Support personnel
  – Technical specialists
  – Environmental clean-up contractors
  – Government officials
Managing the Incident: The Incident Command System (1 of 2)

- OSHA 1910.120(q)
- Experience beyond regulatory and governmental requirements
- NIMS is the baseline incident management system.
Managing the Incident: The Incident Command System (2 of 2)

• Five major components within NIMS:
  – Preparedness
  – Communications and information management
  – Resource management
  – Command and management
  – Ongoing management and maintenance
Incident Management vs. Crisis Management

- Crisis management is an integral element of corporate and industrial organizations.
- Experience has shown there is a direct relationship between incident management and crisis management concerns.
Incident Management vs. Crisis Management (2 of 3)

• An incident:
  – Interrupts normal procedures
  – Has limited and definable characteristics
  – Has the potential to precipitate a crisis

• Examples of incidents may include:
  – Fires
  – Hazmat
  – Medical and rescue emergencies
A crisis is an unplanned event that can exceed the level of available resources and has the potential to impact significantly an organization’s operability, credibility, and reputation, or pose a significant environmental, economic, or legal liability.
ICS Lessons Learned
(1 of 4)

- ICS must be a foundational element of any successful hazmat response program.
- A variety of different players will respond to a working hazmat incident.
- There is no single agency that can effectively manage a major emergency alone.
• Many special operations teams, including HMRTs, tend to be people-dependent programs.
ICS Lessons Learned
(3 of 4)

- The problems are typically associated with planning, training, and the organization buying into the ICS program, as compared to the ICS system itself.
ICS Lessons Learned
(4 of 4)

• The management and control of routine, day-to-day incidents establishes the framework for how the larger, more significant events will be managed.
ICS Elements

- Basic management concepts:
  - Division of labor
- Unity of command
- Span of control
- Establishment of both line and staff functions within the organization
Common Terminology (1 of 3)

• Incident commander:
  – Single command structure
  – Unified command
  – Multiagency coordination center

Courtesy of Eric Bachman
Common Terminology (2 of 3)

• Sections:
  – Operations section
  – Planning section
  – Logistics section
  – Administration/finance section

• Branch

• Division/groups
Common Terminology  (3 of 3)

• Command staff officers:
  – Safety officer
  – Liaison officer
  – Public information officer

South Central Task Force (GGN)
• ICS organizational structure develops:
  - In a modular fashion
  - Based on the size and nature of the incident
  - From the top down
• IC must be identified on all incidents.
Predesignated Incident Facilities (1 of 2)

- Incident command post
  - On-scene location where the IC develops goals and objectives, communicates with subordinates, and coordinates activities between various agencies and organizations
• **Emergency operations center (EOC)**
  – The ICP is the nerve center of on-scene operations and is usually located near the scene of the emergency.

• **Staging area**
  – Designated location where emergency response equipment and personnel are assigned on an immediately available basis until they are needed.
Integrated Communications

• Communications are critical to safe and efficient incident management.
  – Communications interoperability is the key.

• Operations section = “black hole”

• Sensitive communications
Unified Command

• Multijurisdictional/ Multiagency
  – Determining common set of incident objectives and strategies
  – Developing a single IAP
  – Maximizing use of all assigned resources
  – Resolving conflicts between the players
The IAP consists of:

- Incident priorities
- Strategic goals
- Tactical objectives
- Resource requirements
Consolidated Plan of Action
(2 of 2)

• Consolidated action plan ensures:
  – Common emergency response goal
  – Agendas are coordinated
  – Everyone works safely
Comprehensive Resource Management (1 of 2)

• Incident commander must:
  – Analyze overall incident resource
  – Deploy available resources

• Logistics and resource management have been the Achilles’ heel of many responses.
Implementing an Incident Action Plan without sufficient resources is like writing a check with insufficient funds in the bank.
Managing the Incident: Hazmat Group Operations (1 of 5)

- Hazardous materials group is normally under the command of a senior hazmat officer (known as the hazardous materials group supervisor), who, in turn, reports to the operations section chief or the IC.
Managing the Incident: Hazmat Group Operations (2 of 5)

- Responsible for all tactical hazmat operations in hot and warm zones
- Typically HMRT personnel and resources
Managing the Incident: Hazmat Group Operations (3 of 5)

- Hazardous materials group primary functions:
  - Safety function
  - Entry/back-up function
  - Decontamination function
  - Site access control function
• Hazardous materials group secondary functions:
  – Medical function
  – Resource function
The Hazmat Group is responsible for all tactical-level hazmat response operations.
Hazardous Materials Group Staffing (1 of 2)

- Hazardous materials group staffing:
  - Group supervisor
  - Group safety officer
  - Assistant safety officer—hazmat
  - Entry team
  - Back-up team
  - Entry support personnel
Hazardous Materials Group Staffing (2 of 2)

- Hazardous materials group staffing (cont’d):
  - Decontamination team
  - Site access control
  - Hazardous materials information/research team
  - Hazardous materials medical unit
  - Hazardous materials resource unit
Managing the Incident: Street Smarts

- A hazardous materials response is viewed by the outside world two ways:
  - “Technical merit”
  - “Artistic impression”
  - An incident can become a crisis when the political and external issues are not effectively addressed.
Command and Control

• Command and control efforts must be applied toward achieving results.
• If command presence is not strong, both individual and organizational “freelancing” can occur.
• Plan ahead and operate with a backup plan.
Incident Potential
(1 of 2)

• Elements of incident potential can include:
  – Incident severity
  – Magnitude and duration of the event
  – Nature and degree of incident impact
  – Community impact
  – External world and media affairs impact
  – Legal concerns
Causes of a delayed assessment of incident potential include:

- Loss of “big picture”
- Do-it-all attitude
- Failure to request aid
- Downplaying the problem
- Inexperienced
- Lack of information
Decision Making

• Begins with both Command and the hazmat group supervisor recognizing the need to avoid dead-end decisions

• Recognize:
  – Distinction between assumptions and facts
  – A flexible approach to decision making
  – A shift to a management role after initiating action
Information is Power (1 of 2)

- Information may become random
- Tactical worksheets can help
- Poor initial information
- Requires time to gather
- Has a “half-life”
- Combating “nice to have information”
- Reluctance to provide timely information
- True picture vs. made-up
Regular situation status reports must flow from the Operations Section to the Incident Commander.
The Rules of Engagement

- ROE provides the structure for engaging the enemy, including:
  - Chain of command
  - Decision-making authority
  - Accountability
  - Responsibility
- ROE should clarify the relationship between the IC and the HMRT.
- Deal with unacceptable risk.
Liaison Officer

Liaison is:
- A member of command staff
- Viewed as “political officer”
- Point of contact for:
  - Assisting agencies
  - Cooperating agencies
What You See Is Not Necessarily What You Get (1 of 2)

- Underestimating the significance of a hazmat emergency can increase the level of risk to both responders and the public.
- Consistently overreacting is also a problem and can damage the credibility of emergency responders.
What You See Is Not Necessarily What You Get (2 of 2)

• A problem may be perceived when there is not an emergency but physical indicators are present.
• Public intolerance is directly proportional to the length of time citizens are inconvenienced.
Technical specialists and environmental clean-up contractors can be key players in the safe and successful management of a hazmat incident.
Working with Technical Specialists (2 of 2)

• Consider:
  – Specific technical area vs. multidisciplined nature of emergency response
  – Knowledge in a structured and controlled environment
  – No experts, but only information sources
  – No previous contact
  – Questioning information sources
  – Rule of threes
Everybody Has the Answer to Your Problem

- Major incidents bring a number of entrepreneurs, salespeople, managers, and “do gooders.”
- The IC may have to designate the LNO to initially address these external contacts and serve as the “gatekeeper” into the ICS organization.
Everyone Has a Boss

• Regardless of one’s position within an organization, everyone has a boss.
• If the bosses don’t have a clearly defined role within the organization’s incident management/crisis management program, you may have problems as challenging as the incident itself.
• Don’t wait until the incident to address this issue.
The Eternal Optimists

• Remember the PACE model for planning:
  – Have a primary plan
  – Have an alternate plan
  – Have a contingency plan
  – Have an emergency plan

• If you only ask if everything is okay, don’t be surprised when your people consistently say it is.
Long-Term Incidents and Planning

- The majority of hazmat incidents are high intensity—short duration events that are terminated in 8 hours or less.
- Issues such as developing a shift schedule, determining short-term and long-term logistical requirements, and establishing a formal IAP development flow and process are foreign to many responders.
Final Thoughts (1 of 3)

• The effective IC will:
  – Seek out current, accurate, and specific data
  – Delegate information retrieval
  – Know where to find and how to use reference data
  – Collect the right information in the right order
  – Use a wide variety of sources of information
Final Thoughts (2 of 3)

• Solicit opinions and ideas.
• Those taking risks should have an equal voice in the decision-making process.
• Be careful to avoid “groupthink.”
• Never say never.
• Consider the art of communications.
• When an incident goes bad or is particularly politically sensitive, anticipate being the scapegoat.

• In order to minimize political vulnerability, the IC must continuously:
  – Consult and build a consensus within the IAP
  – Document
  – Assume nothing
• The successful management of a hazmat incident is directly linked to the rapid development of an effective incident management process and organization.

• A variety of different players will respond to a working hazmat incident.
• There is no single organization that can effectively manage a major hazmat incident.
• Emergency response programs can be categorized as being either people-dependent or system-dependent.
• If ICS is not used for all routine emergencies, don’t expect it to function when a major emergency occurs.

• The hazardous materials group:
  – Reports to the operations section chief
  – Is managed by a group supervisor
  – Contains an ASO–hazmat
• An effective response effort can be compromised or completely negated by poor management of the political and external issues.