Chapter 7
Use Team Building to Make the Most of Your Public–Private Partnerships

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ABSTRACT

Disaster response is a team effort that begins long before any disaster happens. Teams and work group dynamics have been studied by organizational theorists for decades. It is important to recognize and understand the differences and similarities between teams and work groups in order to most effectively use all teams and all team members in all phases of emergency management, particularly in disaster response. This chapter explores how this differentiation, the distinctive features of work groups and teams, can be used in different places and different phases of response to enhance the efficacy of emergency management. And, because public-private partnerships have played and will play an increasingly vital role within emergency management, this chapter discusses how to use the foundation provided by organizational theorists to make the most of public-private partnerships. This chapter discusses how to exploit differences, draw them out, and use them to enhance the response to incidents.

BACKGROUND

The National Planning Frameworks establish the context for how the United States of America prepares for, mitigates or prevents, responds to and recovers from a vast array of incidents regardless of size or location, natural or man-made. The National Response Framework (NRF) outlines the overall mission and goals for responding to incidents including emergency support functions (ESF's). Today, public-private partnerships can play a vital role in how members of communities achieve the response goals outlined in the NRF.

Within the NRF the ESF's specifically delineate which government agencies are responsible for the functions required to respond to incidents, and which agency is the lead agency for specific ESF's. In addition, the ESF's delineate private sector roles and responsibilities. However, neither the NRF nor the ESF's give any specific guidance on how individuals, groups, organizations or companies can or should work together to achieve the mission of responding to incidents.[1]

Once an incident has occurred, the National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides guidance on how to manage the response to that

specific incident built around the concepts of the ICS and EOC's.[2] The ICS standardizes the organization of individuals responding to incidents and coordinates their activities through a chain-of-command that includes development of a common operating picture and the concept of unity of command. Individuals responding to an incident and assigned to positions throughout the chain of command act together as a work group. Emergency operations centers support multi-agency coordination as well as information sharing, communications, resource management and the support of decision-making. An EOC supports an incident command through strategically planning required resource allocation given the common operating picture developed by an incident commander. This type of strategic planning is more effective when the entities within an EOC operate as a team. Differences between work groups and teams are illustrated in Table XXX below.

INCIDENT COMMAND WORK GROUPS

The response to incidents can be extremely challenging and dangerous. It is not the time for individuals to act without caution. Often the environment after an incident is dirty and lacks even the most basic of necessities, e.g. shelter, power, potable water. Immediately following an incident, responders may be engaged in search and rescue efforts, trying to minimize the loss of life. This phase of response may seem like a frenzy of chaotic activity. To quickly and successfully help victims requires that those individuals responding work together effectively and efficiently. This, in and of itself, necessitates the formation of a work group that respects the authority of an incident commander and his/her chain of command. It means that the individuals assigned positions within the chain of command are willing to sub-

vert their personal values and beliefs to those of the group and focus totally on the task at hand. Once the first phase of a response, e.g. search and rescue, has been completed a response may move into a more stable longer phase that seeks to provide basic necessities to victims and complete damage assessment. Although this phase is more stable it still requires that the tactical decisions of an incident commander are carried out quickly, carefully and usually without question. This allows incident command to develop a common operating picture for use in determining the best direction for the response to take and communicates resource needs to those entities that will provide them.

To consider the behavior of individuals in the work group formed to respond to an incident via the incident command system (ICS) we need to examine the relevant aspects of work groups in general. These work groups are formally organized, i.e. they have specific task-oriented goals and are comprised of individuals who interact directly and actively with each other through the roles and norms established by the ICS and their specific Incident Commander. Individuals in these work groups almost never work outside their given roles. Those who do not conform are subjected to great pressure or simply expelled from the group. Due to these conditions these work groups typically have a high degree of similarity, are heterogeneous, and are extremely cohesive. Although the cohesiveness of a group can be correlated to the group's performance, it can also lead to the condition "groupthink". Again, given the environment such a group is subjected to and the related hazards of the working conditions a high degree of cohesiveness, and even a certain degree of groupthink, is more of a good thing than a bad one. Under these conditions, in the worst case individuality and non-conformity can lead to injuries or death. The question is really how to use these facets of the work group to further enhance its performance.

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