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Incident Recovery

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Editor's Note

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So Much More to Do After the Initial Response

By Catherine L. Feinman

When a disaster strikes, people pay attention. They watch the news, check on their loved ones, and help survivors as they are able. However, when the threat has passed and the initial response has ended, public attention wanes despite there being much more work left to do. Each disaster has a unique combination of factors that determine the outcome. Natural disasters like wildfires and floods may displace residents and increase public health hazards. Accidental catastrophes like a bridge collapse alter transportation routes and impact local, regional, or even national commerce. Intentional threats like acts of violence and civil disobedience have cascading effects that may escalate subsequent threats, risks, and hazards.

The catalyst for each incident differs, the locations and levels of impact vary, and the specific resources needed for the responses change. However, there are some commonalities that apply across disasters. Volunteers, when organized, trained, and managed properly, can enhance emergency response efforts. Technology like drones help facilitate tasks and save precious time when integrated effectively into response plans and deployed within local and federal guidelines. Good social bonds strengthen communities and lessen the devastating effects of a disaster when those bonds are nurtured and supported throughout the community.

These commonalities facilitate recovery efforts following a disaster. When the attention and assistance diminish from people not directly affected, the volunteers, technology, and social bonds continue to be force multipliers for agencies and organizations to leverage during the recovery phase. The authors in this July edition of the Domestic Preparedness Journal share their lessons learned and best practices for managing incidents even after the spotlights are gone. They understand that the initial response is just the beginning of a long recovery journey. Keeping people engaged and pooling available resources help lessen the burden and shorten the road to recovery.

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Thousands of people could have used financial assistance in the aftermath of the August 2023 wildfires in Maui (*Source:* Emergency Assistance Foundation).

The Maui Wildfires, Relief Funds, and Incident Recovery

By Douglas (Doug) Stockham

The concept of financial preplanning is often stressed to individuals in terms of savings accounts and life insurance policies. However, some people do not have the financial means to plan for themselves in this way. Likewise, not everyone is able to withstand the impacts of large-scale disasters and their rippling effects. To prepare response and recovery team members for emergencies and disasters, companies and organizations can offer planning and preparedness options to their employees to help mitigate some of the impacts. However, with many potential disasters and possible outcomes, the best preplanning solutions are not always obvious to assist team members.

An Island on Fire

On August 8, 2023, the deadliest U.S. wildfire since 1918 swept across sections of the Hawaiian island of Maui. President Joe Biden signed a Major Disaster Declaration on August 10 to provide assistance to the state. Governor Josh Green reported that, as of January 2024, 5,404 of those evacuated remained displaced. According to the U.S. Fire Administration's preliminary after-action report in February 2024, more than 100 Mauians lost their lives, the island experienced approximately $5.5 billion in damages, and more than 2,200 structures were destroyed.

Shortly after the fires started, disaster response organizations began activating relief. From needed medical supplies to other necessities, the national response was quick and effective. This distribution of material objects and boots-on-the-ground assistance exemplifies "incident recovery" efforts. The Maui fires also brought an influx of monetary donations to third parties and non-profits for the purpose of providing aid to those affected. Many donations were made to Maui Strong and similar initiatives, with funds still available primarily for local nonprofits to apply for grants. However, getting funds directly into the hands of impacted individuals is more challenging.

Maui reminds companies that they need to pre-plan to support team members in times of unexpected disaster or hardship. A more direct, personal method of financial first response for companies is to enable their impacted team members to apply for essential financial assistance through an employer-sponsored disaster and hardship relief fund. This type of fund puts money directly into the hands of affected individuals, enhancing the path to recovery.

As some organizations began fundraising efforts soon after the Maui disaster, organizations with already established funding streams were able to provide financial assistance directly and immediately to eligible grant recipients within 48 hours of application.

Source: Emergency Assistance Foundation

A Disaster Recovery and Relief Fund Difference

Launching a relief fund to preplan on behalf of team members provides needed financial aid for employees struggling through a disaster or personal hardship, giving them breathing room while they rebuild and recover from an incident. Although differing in how relief is supplied, relief funds (direct financial assistance to individuals) and on-the-ground response (medical, materials, engineering, carpentry) have a shared goal to ease the desperation and burden when a natural disaster hits. While boots-on-the-ground responders may locate shelter, food, and water for those affected, relief funds provide tax-free grants to individuals for necessary shelter, home repairs, food, and other pressing needs following a disaster or personal hardship.

Companies can operate employer-sponsored relief funds internally, or they can hire third-party administrators to independently manage fund activities including accepting donations, reviewing grant applications, awarding and distributing grants, and maintaining legal and regulatory compliance.

Third-party administrators often have established grant processes that take affected team members through the necessary steps of initial registration and application, review, verification, quality checks, and grant award and distribution. Although process timelines vary, these awarded grants can be expedited within hours following a federally declared disaster.

As some organizations began fundraising efforts soon after the Maui disaster, organizations with already established funding streams were able to provide financial assistance directly and immediately to eligible grant recipients within 48 hours of application. For example, in Maui immediately after the wildfires began devastating the island, the nonprofit organization Emergency Assistance Foundation (EAF) provided relief to those impacted through the more than 350 funds it administers.

To help as many families as possible, EAF also launched the Maui Wildfires Relief Fund, a publicly available fund that provided cash grants to others affected by the fires regardless of their connection to an employer-sponsored fund. Ultimately, EAF's Maui Wildfires relief totaled more than $200,000 in grants and assisted 400 individuals and families. EAF will provide similar support for future events through the newly created People First Fund.

Encourage Preplanning and Protection

Regardless of whether a company partners with a third-party relief fund administrator or decides to manage the process internally, one truth remains: now is the time to preplan for a disaster and its impact. Encourage companies or interested team members to learn more about what is available and how disaster and hardship relief funds can enhance individuals' ability to move forward in a crisis. The aftermath of the Maui wildfires provided many financial lessons learned.

Douglas (Doug) Stockham co-founded Emergency Assistance Foundation (EAF) – a 501(c)(3) public non-profit – in 2011 to help companies take care of their team members in need. Bringing his entrepreneurial spirit to EAF, Doug created an organization thathas received more than $395 million in donationstohelp over340,000 individualsand families with grants totaling upwards of $270 million. He has positioned EAF to successfully respond to large-scale disasters – including devastating hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in 2017, the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, andtheongoing conflict in Ukraine – ensuring that financialassistancereaches those in need no matter the location or obstacle. Doug earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Vanderbilt University and a Master of Business Administration degree in finance from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Associates (June 2023).

Five Key Domains of Incident Management

By Aaron Clark-Ginsberg

Throughout the United States, incident management is often closely associated with the Incident Command System (ICS), the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and other federal doctrine. However, effective incident management is not necessarily about alignment with doctrine. Instead, it is about a set of activities for managing an incident. Although ICS-NIMS may play a role in guiding those activities, conflating policy doctrine with activity risks turns incident management into a box-ticking exercise. It can create barriers to engaging with those who do not use ICS-NIMS – whether because they disagree with the utility of ICS-NIMS doctrine, lack training, or have adapted or supplemented ICS-NIMS to meet their community's needs. A new free toolkit can help incident management teams assess and maintain their effectiveness.

RAND recently completed a five-year project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to characterize and develop measures related to the set of activities necessary for incident management. As part of this project, discussions with more than 50 incident managers and other experts and existing doctrine and research on incident management helped to identify five key domains that together comprise incident management:

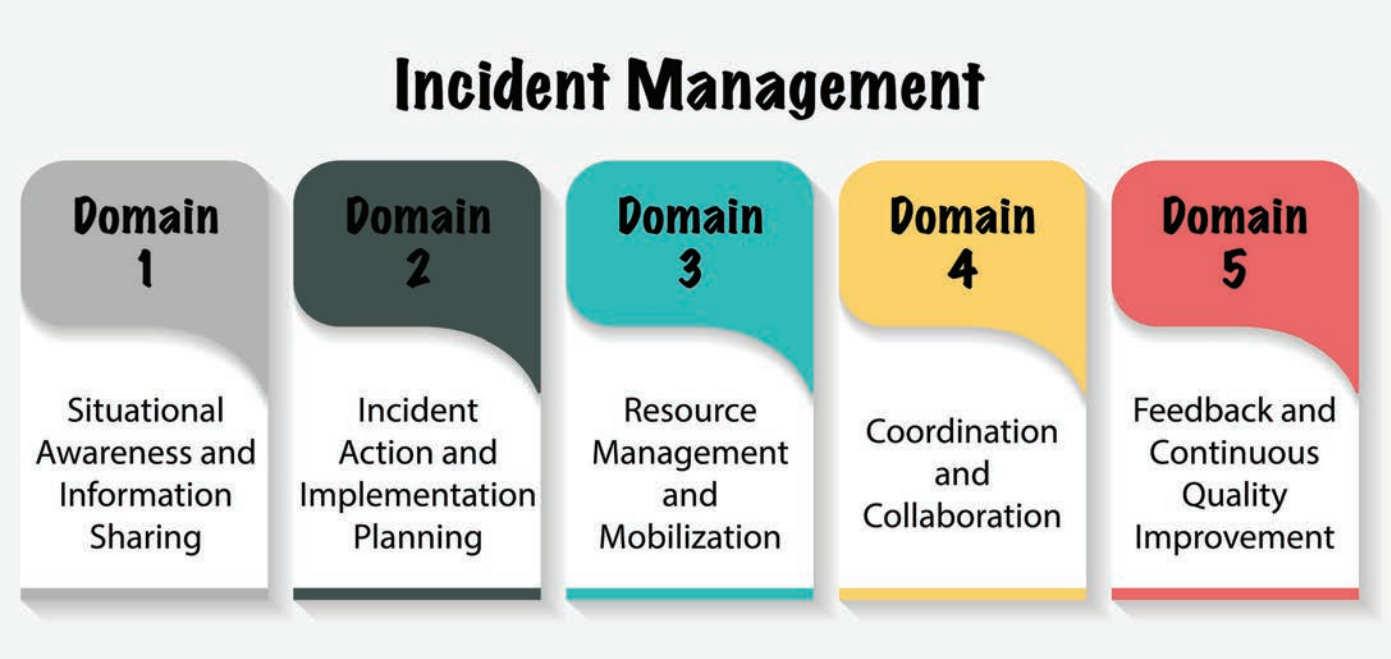
1. Situational Awareness and Information Sharing;
2. Incident Action and Implementation Planning;
3. Resource Management and Mobilization;
4. Coordination and Collaboration; and
5. Feedback and Continuous Quality Improvement.

The following sections provide greater detail on each of these domains.

Domain 1: Situational Awareness and Information Sharing

What this domain includes: This domain encompasses the perception and characterization of incident-related information to identify response needs.

Why this domain matters: Incidents evolve over time. Identifying incidents as they emerge, characterizing them, and sharing information are necessary steps in starting the incident management process. These steps are also continued activities fundamental to adapting to the environment.



Domain 2: Incident Action and Implementation Planning

What this domain includes: This domain encompasses the ongoing articulation and communication of decisions in coherent incident action plans.

Why this domain matters: Incident management requires decision-making – decisions must be made for actions to occur. By its nature, incident management is a team effort, so decisions must be articulated in incident action and implementation plans.

Domain 3: Resource Management and Mobilization

What this domain includes: This domain encompasses the deployment of human, physical, and other resources to match ongoing situational awareness, identification of roles, and relevant decisions.

Why this domain matters: Incident management necessitates having the right human, material, and organizational resources at the right place, at the right time, and in the right amount. Ad hoc efforts to procure and deliver resources may result in less-than-ideal outcomes. Therefore, formal processes through resource management and mobilization are necessary.

Domain 4: Coordination and Collaboration

What this domain includes: This domain encompasses engagement and cooperation between different stakeholders, teams, and departments in managing the incident.

Why this domain matters: Many different people and organizations are involved in incident management – from small nongovernmental organizations and community leaders with insight into specific populations to large government entities providing technical support and critical expertise. Listening, harmonizing, and collaborating are how these stakeholders can work together.

Domain 5: Feedback and Continuous Quality Improvement

What this domain includes: This domain encompasses the need for ongoing evaluation and refinement of incident management processes.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Associates (June 2023).

Why this domain matters: Incidents are periods of near-constant change, meaning that efforts must be made to step back, understand what is and is not working well, and develop course corrections. Change also occurs over a long period at a slower scale, so similar processes should be enacted.

These domains are core to incident management – regardless of the incident, incident management team, and policy doctrine that members of the incident management team are using. Understanding them can help ensure incidents are managed appropriately using practices that can quickly and efficiently resolve them.

Additional Information and a Free Toolkit

These domains can help teams enhance their incident management practices. More information on these domains is available in the 2022 Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness article, "Conceptual Framework for Understanding Incident Management Systems During Public Health Emergencies." Drawing on these domains and in partnership with 20 public health and non-public health incident management teams managing fires, floods, disease outbreaks, and other public health-related incidents, RAND developed a free Incident Management Measurement Toolkit. This toolkit helps teams assess their incident management effectiveness during and after public health incidents and realistic exercises.

Aaron Clark-Ginsberg is a behavioral/social scientist at RAND, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institution.

Source: Samuel/stock.adobe.com

Mitigating Disasters Through Collective Resilience

By Andrew (Andy) Altizer and Barrett Cappetto

When a wildfire, hurricane, tornado, or other event destroys a town, the response often includes community leaders. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) considers disaster management as recurring events with four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Depending on the source, prevention often appears as the fifth phase. Many, if not most, agencies spend less time on the mitigation and recovery phases unless they are part of a large emergency management organization with specialized departments. Since mitigation efforts would likely lessen the impact during recovery efforts, it is important to highlight the value of spending time and resources on the mitigation phase.

Although the *collective resilience* concept is not a normal part of an emergency management process or organizational structure, it could help lessen the effects after an emergency. One definition describes it as the ability of a group of people to adapt to, respond to, and collectively cope with crises. Another refers to it as the influence of existing social bonds.

Implementing the concept should be easily understood by those who adopted FEMA's whole-community approach. Being familiar with the strengths, weaknesses, and abilities of the different community segments facilitates the execution of the emergency management phases.

While grassroots efforts often exemplify this concept, emergency managers and other community leaders can use it to ensure recovery plans include guidance for specific outreach activities such as holding vigils, appreciation events for responders, and productive direction of volunteer forces and donations.

What Does Collective Resilience Look Like?

The answer to this question is different for each crisis. For Las Vegas, it was the construction of the Las Vegas Healing Garden to commemorate the lives lost during the

Route 91 Harvest Festival. For Boston, it was the simple yet effective slogan "Boston Strong" in the wake of the Boston Marathon Bombing. While these examples are significant, such efforts should be formulated and implemented before a catastrophic event.

Trends in public stigma related to mental healthcare and emotional well-being have dramatically shifted over the past 20 years. Regarding disaster recovery, it is critical to consider the "whole person."

Implementing a collective resilience approach starts with executive leadership. Allocating valuable time and resources to something that may or may not happen is typically further down on the priority list of critical response needs. Collective resilience can quickly become a slogan or simply words on paper without executive support.

The conditions that influenced the psychological dimension of collective resilience include:

- The action of subjects, such as the government, corporations, social organizations, and the public;
- Their behavioral characteristics, such as institutional strengths, coordination of collective resource allocation, and collective cognition; and
- The resulting spiritual connotations, such as spiritual identity, collective memory, identification with hero figures, and collectivist value.

Although it must have executive support and be practiced at all organizational levels, collective resilience should be an active process at the smallest level within an organization. The commitment to collective resilience should be demonstrated by the "boots on the ground," whether that is a volunteer cadre, patrol officers, or administrative personnel manning a disaster recovery call center. Seeing positive results from the implementation of collective resilience principles has a "trickle-up" effect, where midlevel management and executive leadership see the psychological and emotional recovery taking place in real time, even when the physical recovery may appear to be stalled.

Despite limited research on the overall concept and its benefits, there is even less information about how to implement such a program through executive support, leadership, and creativity. Organizations that adhere to the benefits of teamwork, collaboration, and camaraderie (or esprit de corps) are headed in the right direction.

Specific ways to build and maintain collective resilience within an organization depend on the creativity and needs of the organization. Examples include:

- Members of groups that demonstrate effective *teamwork* tend to be more productive and care for each other.
- *Human characteristics*, such as empathy, self-value, humility, and trust, may enhance closeness within groups and among individuals.
- Although people value their free time, organizations that build in *social events* during the workday will likely get to know and value their co-workers more.
- *Family events* offer another way to unite people if planned in a manner that does not become a "command performance" event where people are forced to have fun.

Use traditional and outside-the-box thinking to find ways to bring a collective resilience focus to the organization and incorporate, for example:

- Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT),
- New employee orientation at the organizational and departmental levels,
- Neighborhood and community associations, and
- Happy hours (which do not have to be drinking events) or any other well-planned social event designed to bring the community together.

It is worth noting that a poorly planned or self-serving event could have the opposite effect. For example, a social event on a Saturday night could take away valuable personal time and disrupt the work-home balance.

Taking a New Approach

Many people have heard and have said, "I couldn't have done it without you." This kind of thinking should be the desired goal. Establishing a "couldn't have … without you" mentality helps build community relationships that greatly benefit those in need after a critical event. The concept of collective resilience is not part of the typical emergency preparedness strategy, but it can be woven into all phases of emergency management. It just takes creative thinking and research to develop a realistic program. Devoting a little more time and effort to building such teams and finding specific ways to mitigate the effects of an emergency can build stronger communities that are more prepared to face any future threat or hazard.

Andrew (Andy) Altizer has over 20 years of emergency management planning experience and another 10 years of planning experience in the military. He is the emergency preparedness coordinator for The Westminster Schools and a Criminal Justice instructor at Georgia State University. Previously, he was the director of emergency management at Kennesaw State University and director of emergency preparedness at Georgia Institute of Technology. He also served as the critical infrastructure protection program manager at the Georgia Office of Homeland Security. In the U.S. Army, his roles included inspector general, public affairs officer, artillery commander, and plans and operations officer.

Barrett Cappetto is a pipeline controller with Colonial Pipeline Company and is responsible for coordinating control center security and operational readiness. Previously, he served in emergency management and law enforcement roles within the University System of Georgia institutions. He is a graduate of Georgia Highlands College Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and is an alumnus of FEMA's Emergency Management Basic Academy.

Volunteer relief workers in the Houston area after Hurricane Beryl (*Source:* Texans on Mission, July 2024).

Volunteers: Incident Management Assets or Liabilities?

By David Wells

Volunteer responses are often only effective if volunteers and their teams meet specific criteria. They must be trained, prepared, motivated, and deployed. Lesser investments can lead to a diminished mission, a well-meaning but ineffective response, or, in the worst case, a negative outcome. However, a trained, prepared, motivated, and deployed volunteer cohort could magnify the incident management mission greatly.

Texans on Mission has refined these criteria over its 57 years of responding to major disasters in the U.S. and abroad. Each deployment meets these four standards (and involves a continuity pattern of evaluation and retraining) that serve as a base for the organization's volunteer-utilization best practices.

Effectively Trained

In the chaos of incident response and recovery, the difference between ineffective and effective operations is often training. Providing volunteers with a functional-based best-practice outcome helps agencies define roles and responsibilities more effectively.

Texans on Mission provides intensive training that experienced volunteers write, review, and conduct. These volunteers understand the purpose, work, and methods of disaster relief and have years of experience in incident management.

The general training, which is repeated every five years, is a two-hour overview of volunteer expectations and opportunities. While this training is delivered in person, an online course is also offered for convenience. In addition to the general training and orientation, specialty areas involve classroom training to ensure volunteers understand organizational procedures and mentors who accompany them during callouts.

In addition to training in the methods of effective volunteer response, this training includes the following expectations:

- *Adaptability* – Training curricula offer best practices while acknowledging the need for flexibility learned through previous deployments. This philosophy enables trainees to adapt to changing needs within a deployment.
- *Diverse specialty training* – Volunteers begin their training journey with a broad-based overview of disaster response and recovery. However,

the majority seek specialty training that allows them to move from generalists to trained specialists within several subdisciplines, including incident management and leadership, food handling, chainsaw and heavy equipment operation, shower and laundry provision, fire and flood recovery, child care, damage assessment, chaplaincy, temporary roofing techniques, and more.

- *Outcome-based, effective incident response and recovery standards* – Volunteer responders do not work in a vacuum. They must interact with governmental entities, responders, nongovernmental organizations and other responding volunteers, humanitarian aid providers, survivors, the larger public, local businesses, and the media. Early recovery efforts established organizational strategies to improve work efficiencies. Those efforts also integrated the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Incident Command System within the organization, which is familiar to other responders such as firefighters, law enforcement, and emergency management. Training to a professional standard allows volunteer organizations to interact more efficiently and effectively within the incident area of operation.

Practically Prepared

Preparation may seem like an extension of training, but there is a distinction. While training provides hands-on techniques and methods, preparation elements include practice, volunteer interaction, team-building, and mental and emotional readiness for deployment.

For example, during the basic feeding onboarding, there is a combination of classwork and lab/fieldwork. In addition to learning safety elements such as the five key bacteria and viruses that cause food-borne illnesses in many humans, volunteers are onboarded through lab trainings and deployments. During these activities, leadership and experienced mentoring volunteers guide trainees through safety practices that prevent food-borne illnesses.

Likewise, chainsaw volunteers are exposed to a multi-hour classroom experience. Next, they undergo an outdoor lab that covers best safety practices, chainsaw techniques, and an introduction to working in an incident environment with a team of others (carrying dangerous equipment).

In summary, many volunteers do not have prior experience in the often-chaotic environment of disaster response. This onboarding process exposes them to effective classroom education, practical hands-on training, and the development of a resilience mindset to increase their field effectiveness within the organization's mission parameters.

Since training is only a half-measure for volunteer readiness, it is critical to stress putting training into practice and individuals into context with their specialty teams. The intent is twofold: (1) Integrate each volunteer's training into a practical setting, and (2) put volunteers into a group setting that promotes integration, camaraderie, and group effectiveness.

Although practice events often fill these opportunities, it is beneficial to quickly funnel newer volunteers into smaller, local responses or non-disaster contexts such as mass feeding for large meetings. These non-incident or low-level practical preparedness events manifest as mental and emotional readiness for large-scale, disaster-related deployments. They also

Source: Texans on Mission (July 2024)

promote confidence in abilities and training, familiarity with tasks and functions, and mental readiness for the demands of large-scale deployments.

Preparing volunteers involves becoming familiar with response tools. Incident recovery often uses specialty equipment that relies on prepared operators, from simple wheelbarrows for removing debris from a home to a complex skid-steer working with a chainsaw team. Effective equipment operation represents opportunities to serve more survivors.

On an organizational scale, being connected to state and national disaster entities boosts readiness levels. These connections facilitate discussions about critical needs and where and how to respond to impacted areas. In turn, volunteer organizations have greater access to disaster areas to serve families in the most needed locations and ways.

It bears noting that a successful preparedness strategy includes a decentralized equipment model. For example, Texans on Mission owns only about 25% of its response equipment and houses it at its Dallas headquarters. Churches and Baptist denominational associations scattered around 14 areas in Texas own the majority to ensure fast deployment and utilization by local churches and teams to meet community needs and help churches serve their communities.

The decentralization of equipment and volunteer teams serves the organization's mission by spreading the services across a large state. However, mission effectiveness relies on a centralized model of leadership, corporate communications, fundraising, financial services, warehousing, and maintenance of many of the larger support vehicles and ancillary equipment, such as cargo trailers and feeding units.

These centralized, shared services can be illustrated in the organization's fundraising efforts. As a faith-based nonprofit, the work is primarily funded through private and church-funded methods, with little foundation giving and no governmental support. By centralizing its fundraising efforts, the organization can guide donors to provide resources that best fit the needs of the overall organization. In addition to these macro-level strategic fundraising efforts, the teams around the state fund their local work and the purchase and maintenance of their equipment through micro-level fundraising efforts.

Motivated to Serve

In addition to training and preparation, volunteer and professional organizations often share the belief that an effective responder is a motivated responder. While motivations differ from individual to individual and organization to organization, volunteers in faith-based organizations tend to have strong faith-driven motivations that compel them to respond through action. Organizations can provide

survivors with spiritual and mental support through specialties like chaplaincy.

Critical Incident Stress Management training, for example, is geared toward survivors, first responders, and other volunteers to enhance effective incident recovery. With this training, chaplains can rapidly morph from an active assailant incident to a tornado recovery. They train to respond to various stress factors and types of events. The motivation of faith-based organizations is captured in taglines like that of Texans on Mission, "Bringing help, hope, and healing." Volunteers bring spiritual as well as physical help, hope, and healing.

Actively Deployed

Volunteer responders are a game-changer for incident recovery, but only if trained, prepared, and motivated. All the trained volunteers, outfitted trailers, and desire to provide help, hope, and healing mean nothing without going and doing. Deployment can range from a single unit for a single day to every aspect of response with thousands of volunteers over months. Following the initial disaster relief deployment is the physical work of rebuilding homes, houses, and families long after the initial response ends. Tropical Storm Beryl is a current example of those efforts.

Effective volunteerism starts with volunteers who respond with action, meaning volunteers who deploy. Volunteer presence initiates a certain proof of volunteer effectiveness. Being present and demonstrating the professionalism of the volunteer organization conveys volumes to the survivors and the people they work alongside. Credibility among volunteer organizations is imperative for effective response and recovery.

That broader, external public credibility was illustrated in 2024 when the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) honored Texans on Mission as the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) member organization of the year. Texans on Mission was the first organization to receive the recognition.

According to TDEM, the award "recognizes an individual or group that has demonstrated exceptional commitment, impact, and service in disaster response and recovery across our great state. The recipient exemplifies the four Cs of VOAD – cooperation, communication, coordination and collaboration." Such recognition is a referendum on the volunteer team's effectiveness and its value to the greater mission of incident response.

As the disaster relief director of a faith-based, volunteer-focused nonprofit organization that provides disaster relief for a broad spectrum of natural and human-caused disasters, this author has had a front seat in participating in and leading disaster responses for almost three decades. These experiences have solidified his belief that organized volunteer-led efforts are integral to total incident recovery management.

David Wells is director of Disaster Relief for Texans on Mission, a U.S. 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that empowers volunteers of the Christian faith to respond to the biggest challenges around the globe through disaster relief and feeding, water sustainability, and capacity-building initiatives. Wells began his response journey as a Baptist pastor in Wyoming, leading his congregation to provide aid to travelers trapped by routine interstate closings due to snow. He later became state director for Disaster Relief for the Wyoming Southern Baptist Convention. As a pastor in Missouri, he led shower, chainsaw, laundry, and feeding response teams among Missouri Baptists, eventually becoming associate director of Disaster Relief for the Missouri Baptist Convention. Wells joined Texans on Mission in 2019 and has served as the director of Disaster Relief since 2020.

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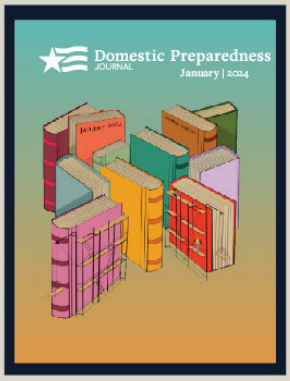

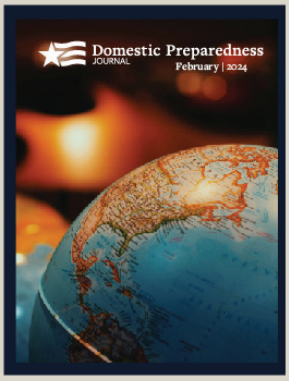

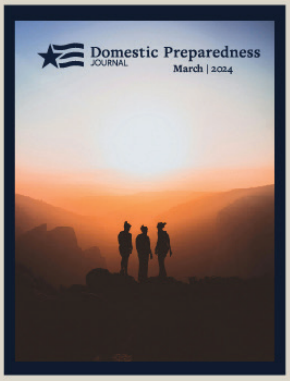

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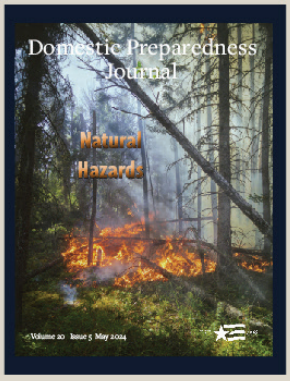

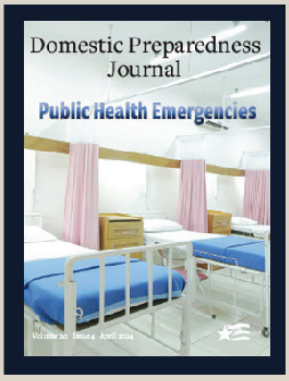

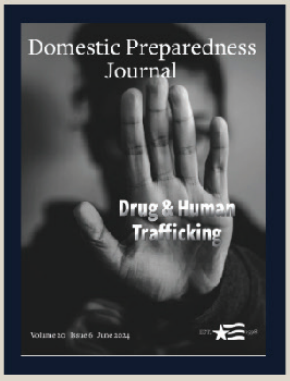

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Drones – A Life-Saving Time-Saver

By Kevin Jones

Small unmanned aircraft systems, commonly known as drones, have demonstrated massive potential in the military, government, and private sectors. These small propeller-driven aircraft can be remotely piloted and used to perform many tasks and carry additional tools such as cameras and lights. However, there has been a sometimes-justified concern of an ever-increasing surveillance state. At the same time, drug cartels utilize drones to move drugs across the southern U.S. border and monitor U.S. Border Patrol agents. With internet shopping promising immediate delivery of purchases, the world is witnessing in near real-time drones being used in modern European battlefields against conventional infantry and armored vehicles, once thought to be protected from such small devices.

Many counterinsurgency and reconnaissance schools teach how to avoid detection by drones and how to conduct counter-drone warfare operations. However, some people may overlook the positive applications of drone operations. As technology advances, so do laws, policies, and training. For example, law enforcement drones deployed properly can save time, money, and, most importantly, lives. They can be used in search operations, deployed to quickly document crime scene investigations, and used to check rooftops, corners, and hidden areas for suspects evading law enforcement.

Drone operations fall under the rules outlined in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Title 14, Part 107 – Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems. However, over the years, policies and laws have begun to allow drone deployment day or night without prior FAA approval. In some cases, organizations may have conducted emergency nighttime operations previously and informed the FAA of the emergency. In other circumstances, they needed prior authorization, which could have taken 30 days or more. The process is now easier for certified operators and pilots to deploy these tools immediately.

Increasing Public Safety Applications for Drone Technology

A growing deployment opportunity for drone teams is for search and rescue operations, which can occur in wilderness environments away from civilization or urban and suburban environments. Once someone goes missing in any city, the vast number of open fields, wooded areas, parks, apartment complexes, trails, and numerous other places where a person can hide, get lost, or be unseen quickly becomes apparent to search teams.

For example, a significant realization emerged while volunteering on a ground team in the Rocky Mountains and later working for a suburban law enforcement agency at the edge of a major metropolitan area. Anyone

could find themselves in the wilderness after walking for just an hour. However, it could take up to an hour to mobilize local search and rescue teams that need time to respond and get briefed.

Because of time and environmental factors, it is critical to begin search and rescue operations immediately when a person goes missing. Response times can take at least an hour. Temperatures in certain areas can drop drastically once the sun goes down or rise suddenly during the day. For example, when someone sweats all day, their core body temperature can drop through the night with life-threatening implications. For visibility, daytime operations are easier than those performed at night.

With drones, searches can start immediately while waiting for search and rescue teams to assemble. In one case, an operator was able to search nearby construction areas, open fields, and wooded areas for a missing child. Even though that drone was not equipped with advanced capabilities and the information transmitted back had to be confirmed by ground personnel several times, the drone picked up anomalies in the area to help locate the child hiding in the woods.

In another case, a suicidal adult went missing on foot after dark. He entered a wooded area and crossed a river into a neighboring jurisdiction. Through a mutual aid agreement, the drone operator responded and sent the drone across the river. In such cases, responders should use caution when someone is a danger to themselves because they may also pose a danger to others. With low visibility and many potential hazards, the drone offered a quicker and safer way to locate, approach, and verify the person than sending a search team.

Traditional law enforcement K-9s also would not be ideal for such search and rescue operations and pose a liability to the agency. These K-9 units are frequently trained as "bite" and "drug" dogs to search for suspects, detain them, and look for contraband rather than dogs specifically trained to search for victims. Although direct data is not readily available, most law enforcement agencies in city and suburban areas do not have specially trained search and rescue dogs and would have to request outside sources.

As a search-and-rescue tool, drones can almost immediately shrink a search area. They are maneuverable in and around buildings, apartment complexes, and neighborhoods. In addition, modern lighting and battery technology can be attached to drones while maintaining lighter weight and increased battery power efficiency, for example:

- Forward-looking infrared night vision cameras utilize and enhance existing light in an area to see clearly in extremely dark environments.
- In areas where no light can be enhanced (often inside buildings or on dark nights), other lighting sources can assist, such as infrared lighting, which is not visible to the naked eye. This lighting can also be used for night vision optics if necessary.

These technologies look for the infrared signature in thermal energy or heat while utilizing different colors to represent thermal temperatures in that spectrum. Everything on the planet gives off a level of heat – from cold items like ice to hot items like fire – including humans, who have their own level of thermal energy on the heat spectrum. Fire departments frequently use a similar tool to check walls for heat in homes. This tool is effective day or night and can be more helpful than direct optics or cameras in identifying heat signatures in open fields, wooded areas, or other areas. Bright spotlights attached to drones can also

help confirm what the forward-looking infrared or night vision sees during searches. These lights can also signal to people on the ground. Each tool has a unique function, so none should be sacrificed for the other.

First-Hand Accounts of Successful Drone Applications

The search for missing children is tedious. However, once drone operators began responding to reports such as missing children cases, support for drones has grown. Law enforcement agencies realized how quickly a minimal number of officers could check open fields and other locations.

In a personally observed example, even at night with scattered trees and other obstructions, a single drone operator checked an undeveloped field the size of eight city blocks within minutes. Similar searches of the same field took four officers over an hour to conduct. Another time-saving scenario occurred when the SWAT team was serving a search warrant at a drug house. On that call, the drone's primary purpose was to check for dangers around the house and anyone escaping. However, when announcements for everyone to exit the residence were unsuccessful, the drone was able to assist. The drone operator lowered the device to window height along the fence line and turned on the spotlight. Even though this occurred during daylight hours, people immediately exited the residence as instructed.

The drone was also a time-saver for mapping crime scenes and taking crime-scene photos. Other added technology helped to measure rooms, roads, and intersections for more accurate documentation. Motor vehicle crash scenes started being documented in this manner for major crashes, which lessened the time it took for roadways to be closed and increased the investigators' safety by exposing them to fewer traffic hazards.

Safeguards and Limitations for Using Emerging Technologies

Although the tasks regarding drone use are somewhat limitless, they still must follow FAA regulations. Line of sight, altitude, weather, marker lighting, and controlled airspace are major limiting factors. One limitation includes no drone access to a high-threat area. For example, a building within the FAA Class C Controlled airspace would have limited drone operation applications around that complex, even if it is a high-risk area with numerous SWAT or other public safety responses.

As with any tool, it can be difficult to explain the tool's limitations to an administrator who expects more than simply enhancing their ability. In search operations, for example, drones are not a substitution for ground teams, K-9 units, or other air assets that include observation and radio relays. A lack of knowledge about these limitations can result in administrators requesting actions that are against the law or against FAA regulations, such as attaching something to the drone, flying it out of sight, or doing something else with the equipment.

Operators must know what is allowed in their area and politely explain these limitations to administrators as needed. Basic FAA laws include requirements that drones fly no more than 400 feet above ground when there is no controlled airspace, yet they must remain at least 500 feet below cloud cover. Drones must have marker lights on at night, must yield to manned aircraft, and limit their speed to no more than 100 miles per hour. The drone operator also must maintain a line-of-sight visual of the drone. These are just a few of the FAA rules, but operators must be familiar

with additional laws and restrictions within each jurisdiction where drone response is requested. Any leader in charge of a drone unit should also attend training and stay apprised of the regulations and capabilities of the equipment.

Avoid Crossing the Line

Most uses mentioned above are supplemental for enhancing response, increasing first responder safety, providing better public service, and improving search operations – whether for an endangered missing person or a suspect who is a danger to the public. Implementing a drone program costs money, with an average startup cost of $15,000 for a police department, according to dronefly.com in 2021. However, compare this to the cost of a helicopter. In Ohio, for example, Hamilton Sheriff Charmaine McGuffey reported in 2022 that "choppers cost the county $3 million a year, while 15 drones will only cost $300,000 and require little maintenance." When agencies update their budgets and plans, they should consider including this tool in their future operations as drones can save taxpayer money, increase safety with fewer resources, and distance responders from immediate threats.

Of course, there tends to be a fine line between promoting public safety and building revenue. For example, when there is a sudden uptick in vehicle accidents, safety issues, or traffic problems, a drone could monitor and potentially assist in evidence gathering. However, using drones specifically for routine traffic or equipment violations such as red-light enforcement, expired plates, cracked windshields, or broken tail lights may cross a line that could diminish public trust and the ability to gain support for needed equipment. In these long-term or routine scenarios, a permanent observational camera would be more practical to watch for problems and collect data.

Although the public safety function of drones is almost limitless, they are tools that require proper training and must follow current laws and procedures, including FAA Rules and Regulations under Part 107, federal, local, and state laws, the jurisdiction's municipal code, the policies and procedures of the agency, and best practices and training for public safety drone operators. To build a robust drone program that promotes public safety and assists first responders, organizations and agencies must be cautious and use drones to improve public trust and rapport rather than become a topic of contention. Agencies can leverage public affairs and social media with the public to build trust and share information about drones aiding in investigations, missing person searches, etc. With so many benefits for incident response, it is critical for drones to avoid the negative "big brother" effect by being used responsibly and promoted as a valuable public safety tool.

Kevin Jones, CPP, is a school protection specialist and security manager. He spent nearly 20 years in law enforcement before starting work in a school district and more than a decade as a crisis and hostage negotiator. He was also a firearms instructor, investigator, and supervisor. Jones regularly conducts threat assessments and intelligence reports and is passionate about crisis intervention, de-escalation, and early intervention. He maintains his remote pilot license and has helped to develop and implement a drone unit with his previous organization.

The reopened waterway under the Key Bridge in Baltimore, Maryland, June 20, 2024 (*Source*: Thomas Deaton, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

Key Bridge Collapse – Through the Lens of Community Lifelines

By Michael Prasad

Emergency managers now use dashboards to summarize much of what an incident's response and recovery work entails along the lines of community-based impacts through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Community Lifelines. FEMA utilizes these lifelines as an information-gathering tool to quickly describe to agency administrators and leaders the scale and scope of an incident. Those metrics can drive the creation of incident objectives and provide an overview of the situation as the incident expands and contracts. This process is similar to using an ICS 209 Incident Status Summary Form but does not generate the same level of detail. FEMA notes that the status of each lifeline can be determined by reviewing situational reports, such as the ICS 209s, and communicating with partners and stakeholders in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

As of June 15, 2024, the *Dali* has been refloated, and the last major pieces of the steel bridge truss have been removed from the Patapsco River. The deepest channel – the Fort McHenry Federal Channel – has been restored to the full 700-foot width and 50-foot depth, allowing all commercial and military vessels to safely travel into and out of the Port of Baltimore.

This article proposes another way to quantify the total current state of response and recovery progress conducted for the Key Bridge collapse by the unified command and local, county, and state governments. The current version of the FEMA Community Lifelines has eight major distinct elements: Safety and Security; Food, Hydration, Shelter; Health and Medical; Energy (Power & Fuel); Communications; Transportation; Hazardous Materials; and Water Systems.

One of the features of the Community Lifelines dashboard is a traffic-light-type color-coding of current adverse impact status: green indicates minimal impact, yellow is moderate impact, and red is significant impact. In addition, grey indicates unknown impact, and blue is for administrative purposes such as presentations and briefings (see Figure 1). The following sections describe the author's unofficial analysis of the Community Lifelines dashboard approach and assignment of these colors, utilizing the real-world example of the Key Bridge collapse.

Fig. 1. Complete List of Community Lifelines and Color Schema (*Source:* Barton Dunant).

Safety and Security

This lifeline covers law enforcement, security, fire service, search and rescue, government service, and community safety. Initially, when the bridge collapsed, there were additional response and recovery resources needed for law enforcement, security, and search and rescue. In addition, there were major impacts on critical infrastructure for this lifeline beyond the loss of the workers and the bridge itself. Port security was impacted, as the debris initially blocked the waterways to Hawkins Point and the USCG capabilities based there. For first responders, the Key Bridge offered a much shorter route to some of the neighborhoods and hospitals located on either end of the bridge. This lifeline may have started out red while the bridge roadways were being closed and massive first responder resources were engaged but could now be categorized as green, as mobile safety and security assets can be repositioned.

Food, Hydration, Shelter

This lifeline has food, hydration, shelter, and agriculture associated with it. Initially, with major warehouse operations in and around the port, there were some food and agricultural impacts, which were counteracted via public-private partnerships. While there was moderate or yellow impacts initially, these have since stabilized relative

to this Community Lifeline. So, this would now be green.

Health and Medical

This lifeline covers medical care, public health, patient movement, medical supply chain, and fatality management. The six workers who perished were recovered over a multi-week period that did not overwhelm responders. The two survivors from the bridge collapse were the only ones who required health and medical treatment. While divers were in the water, this lifeline might have reached a yellow level to emphasize the significant health risks undertaken, but now that any work in the water is crane-based debris salvage only, one might consider revising this Community Lifeline as green. However, viewing this lifeline from a community-based impact, with ongoing increased response times for emergency medical services traveling to fixed-location hospitals and with the loss of the bridge, it should remain yellow.

Energy (Power & Fuel)

This lifeline has power grid and fuel elements associated with it, with a natural gas pipeline running directly under the bridge. Initially, there was a concern that it was potentially compromised by the bridge collapse. Unified command worked with the utility company (Baltimore Gas and Electric, BGE) to make inert the pipeline by depressurizing it and removing any gas flow during the response operations. The public is not impacted by this gas pipeline shutdown, as there are redundancies in BGE's distribution system, and this private utility will coordinate with regulators and other governmental officials to safely restore capability when authorized. Coal supplies to India from the Curtis Bay Coal Piers and the Baltimore Marine Terminal were also impacted while the port was closed. Restoring this maritime supply chain – the 9th largest port in the U.S. – is critical to "the U.S. economy, national security, and resilience." With the bridge debris removed and maritime traffic resuming operations, this lifeline started out as red and is now green.

Communications

This lifeline covers infrastructure, responder communications, alerts, warnings, messages, finance, 911, and dispatch. On April 16, 2024, Region 3 of the Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC) mobilized following the Baltimore bridge collapse. With the cleanup of Key Bridge debris and an estimated 178 containers remaining in the water, international ships were told they would remain docked for another month. Although the bridge collapse did not impact any responder or local community communications systems, there were foreign nationals who were suddenly without communications support. Initially, this lifeline could have been yellow to draw attention to this unmet need. ITDRC was providing telecommunications connectivity to the crews stranded on cargo ships stuck in port. As segments of navigable waterways were opening up around the bridge area – and the stranded *Dali* – the need for real-time hydrographic survey data required interagency partnerships and GIS data feeds communicated to third parties: the ship operators and others. As noted below, with the port fully open, there should be no more consequence management elements of communications systems interruptions and disruptions, so this lifeline would be green.

Transportation

This lifeline has highway, roadway, motor vehicle, mass transit, railway, aviation, and maritime associated with it. Since Monday, June 10, 2024, the entire shipping channel to

Fig. 2. Key Bridge Community Lifelines Opinion (*Source:* Barton Dunant).

Salvage operations after the Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, Maryland, April 2, 2024 (*Source:* Charles Delano, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

the Port of Baltimore has been open. While maritime activity has returned to a "new normal," the highway, roadway, and motor vehicle travel on the section of I-695, where the bridge was, is still closed. Continued communications from the State of Maryland, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, and the City of Baltimore to the public are in place now to show alternatives for travel around the bridge. Restoring full capability to the entire Transportation Community Lifeline is the primary focal area of concern for the government. This lifeline was red initially and should remain red until the bridge is rebuilt.

Hazardous Materials

This lifeline covers facilities, hazardous materials, pollutants, and contaminants. Hazardous materials were in the shipping containers that went into the river. The Key Bridge provided an alternate route for trucks carrying hazardous materials, which are prohibited from going through any of the area's tunnels, including the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel. As such, the increased movement of hazardous material trucking around the community is still a known threat. This lifeline started as red and should remain yellow until the Key Bridge is rebuilt.

Water Systems

This lifeline has potable water infrastructure and wastewater management associated with it. The Key Bridge collapse had no significant initial or ongoing impacts on this Community Lifeline. This would be green in both timeframes, from the start of the incident to now.

The Common Operating Picture

Figure 2 shows what the common operating picture could look like for each Community Lifeline – with one column showing the

author's view of the initial status and another showing how the current status of each lifeline could be aligned.

Please note that the unified command for the Key Bridge Response 2024 is not currently publicly reporting its results in this format, nor is it required or obligated to do so. This is the author's personal view of their work – "the what, so what, and now what" – subjectively from a different lens, one used commonly today by emergency management in other large-scale incident responses when supported by FEMA [Also note: FEMA is not part of the Key Bridge response or unified command efforts].

Although somewhat aligned, FEMA's set of Community Lifelines is different from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's definition of Infrastructure Lifeline Systems, which are Energy and Water, Facilities, Information and Communications Technology, and Transportation. Community Lifelines are also more comprehensive, but yet inclusive of the elements of the National Institute of Building Sciences' Lifeline Infrastructure Hub, which contains "water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, liquid fuels, communications, and multi-modal transportation – highways and roads, rail, airports, and ports and harbors."

Russell Rains of the Kentucky Department for Public Health has created a free spreadsheet version of the FEMA Community Lifelines toolkit. An application of the above elements on that tool is included in this link, which also includes commentary on how to move each lifeline to green status. Emergency managers can promote the use of Community Lifelines to help show the adverse impacts of any incident on critical areas of any community. While initially designed to measure direct federal support from the start of an incident through the conclusion of response operations, anyone can use them for the full disaster cycle (Preparedness through Mitigation) on an all-hazards basis.

This article is the fourth in a series on the March 2024 collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, MD:

1. *Key Bridge Collapse – Transportation Infrastructure and Global Supply Chain*
2. *Week 2 – Restoring Infrastructure and Instilling Resilience*
3. *Key Bridge Collapse: Unity of Effort*
4. *Key Bridge Collapse – Through the Lens of Community Lifelines*

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Source: Andrey Popov/Adobe Stock

What Level of Ugly Are Communities Prepared For?

By Joseph J. Leonard Jr.

In the wake of the recent assassination attempt on Former President Donald Trump and the upcoming presidential election, the United States stands at a critical juncture. As an emergency manager at the state or local level, the task of ensuring public safety amid potential civil disobedience, civil unrest, tactical ultra-violence, and home-grown terrorism is both daunting and urgent. The events in Butler, Pennsylvania, on July 13, 2024, highlight the pressing need for a shared interagency planning effort that fosters enhanced interoperability and a common operational picture during periods of heightened domestic tension.

This article examines the importance of such planning, current challenges, and actionable suggestions to better prepare for the uncertain times ahead. This article references a current incident with an ongoing investigation. Information may change based on new findings or as investigators release additional information to the public. However, this should not detract from the article's overall preparedness focus.

Interagency planning and enhanced interoperability are crucial in managing incidents and events effectively. In an era where threats can escalate rapidly, seamless coordination among agencies ensures that resources are utilized efficiently, information is shared promptly, and decisions are based on a comprehensive understanding of the situation. A common operational picture offers stakeholders a unified view of the incident or event, facilitating timely and informed decision-making. Remember that Benjamin Franklin once said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

The attempted assassination highlights the need for proper planning and interoperability. The seeming lack of coordination between the United States Secret Service and state and local law enforcement agencies contributed to miscommunication and confusion. It has been widely reported in the media and by House Homeland Security Chair Mark Green, who visited the incident site on July 22, 2024, that Secret Service agents did not attend a pre-event briefing with local law enforcement and that state and local law enforcement representatives were not

permitted in the Secret Service command post during the event. Such shortcomings can exacerbate the impact of crises, leading to increased casualties, property damage, and public distrust.

Analyzing the Attempted Assassination of President Trump

This incident is an ideal case study for understanding emergency managers' challenges. On July 13, 2024, a political rally turned violent with an assassination attempt on Former President Trump. While the crowd remained unusually calm, and there were no significant injuries from a widespread panic, Trump was wounded, another attendee, a former fire chief from a local community, was killed, and two other attendees were critically wounded.

Several planning steps are required to help avoid catastrophe. These include:

- *Unified Command Structure* – Although required by Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5, incidents in which multiple agencies operate independently without a clear command structure can create conflicting actions and strategies. Being in the same room does not mean that an effective unified command has been established. In the National Incident Management System, the unified command is a team effort that allows agencies with geographic or functional responsibility for an incident to actively participate in the process. This includes establishing a common set of incident objectives, jointly determining strategies to accomplish those objectives, and determining resource requirements. As multi-jurisdictional incidents and events become more complex, the need for an effective unified command increases.
- *Communication Channels* – Communication breakdowns can hinder the timely flow of critical information, causing delays in response times and uncoordinated efforts. Effective and efficient incident management relies on communicating clearly and rapidly across multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency lines to deliver timely, relevant, and actionable information. In 2005, New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean commented that:

  > *It is a scandal in our minds that four years after 9-11, we have not yet set aside radio spectrum to [ensure] that police, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians can communicate reliably during any kind of attack or any kind of major disaster.*

- *Resource Allocation* – When resources are inadequate for the task at hand, it leads to gaps in coverage and delayed assistance. A robust planning effort before and throughout the incident or event can support effective resource allocation, task assignment, and coordination. It facilitates systematic management of personnel, resources, equipment, capabilities, and facilities to accomplish operational and management objectives.
- *Common Operational Picture* – Without a common operational picture, decision-makers cannot have a comprehensive view of an unfolding situation, resulting in reactive rather than proactive measures. A shared, comprehensive common operational picture supports active, informed, and timely decision-making that facilitates operational success.

Preparing for the Upcoming Election

As the nation approaches the upcoming election, the potential for civil unrest and violence at planned events and spontaneous gatherings remains high. The Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1968 was extremely violent. The political climate is charged, and the recent assassination attempt has heightened tensions. Adding Chicago's high incidence of gun violence creates a mix of what emergency managers and elected officials might call "ugly." Following are some proactive steps that emergency managers and public safety professionals can take before, during, and after the election to ensure preparedness and resilience.

Before the Election

- *Enhanced Training and Drills* – Conduct joint training and exercises involving all relevant agencies to simulate potential scenarios. These drills should focus on establishing a unified command structure, improving communication protocols, and testing interoperability.
- *Robust Intelligence Sharing* – Establish a real-time intelligence-sharing framework among federal, state, local, and tribal agencies. Also, consider if and where the private sector and non-governmental agencies should be included in this information sharing. Dedicate resources to monitoring social media and other platforms for early warning signs of unrest.
- *Community Engagement* – Foster trust and communication with community leaders and organizations, especially those actively planning the myriad political rallies over the next hundred days. Engaging with the community can help de-escalate tensions and provide valuable insights into potential flashpoints.

Source: aimart/Adobe Stock

After the Winner Is Declared

As the elections of 2000 and 2020 showed us, this may not be election night. Considering options before the winner is declared can pay significant long-term benefits. These can include:

- *Rapid Deployment Teams* – Create specialized rapid deployment teams equipped to respond to civil unrest. These teams should train for crowd control, de-escalation techniques, and emergency medical response.
- *Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation* – Maintain a vigilant

watch on evolving situations and adapt response plans accordingly. Flexibility and agility in response strategies are crucial during this period of heightened uncertainty.

- *Public Information Campaigns* – Develop clear and consistent messaging to inform the public about safety measures, legal consequences of violent actions, and ways to stay safe. Transparent communication can help reduce panic and misinformation.

Beyond Inauguration Day

The period following the inauguration is equally critical. Regardless of the election outcome, there is potential for continued unrest. It is imperative to remain vigilant and prepared for any eventuality.

- *Strengthened Partnerships* – Continue to build and maintain partnerships with federal agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, and private sector entities. These collaborations enhance resource availability and support.
- *Long-Term Resilience Planning* – Incidents of civil unrest have been increasing in recent years. Although typically more in the purview of elected officials rather than emergency managers, there is a need to consider long-term resilience by investing in community-based programs that address underlying political, social, and economic issues contributing to unrest. Programs to improve education, employment, and social cohesion can potentially mitigate some causes of violence.
- *Post-Incident Analysis and Improvement* – After any incident, conduct thorough after-action reviews to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Follow-through on improvement plans is equally critical. Implementing lessons learned is essential for continuous improvement and future preparedness.

The assassination attempt and the upcoming election present significant challenges. The Butler, Pennsylvania incident underscores the need for a shared interagency planning effort that fosters enhanced interoperability and a common operational picture that supports informed decision-making. By appropriately planning before an event and adopting proactive measures, emergency managers can better prepare for potential civil unrest and violence.

The key to effective crisis management lies in collaboration, communication, and continuous improvement. While navigating these turbulent times, the role of emergency managers is more critical than ever. Working together and leveraging the strengths of each agency can ensure a safer and more resilient future for communities.

Actionable suggestions for emergency managers include:

- *Develop Comprehensive Interagency Plans* – Create detailed plans that outline the roles and responsibilities of each agency, establish a unified

command structure, and define communication protocols. Regularly update and test these plans to ensure they remain effective. Ensure agencies identified in these interagency plans are involved in the planning efforts to ensure they are aware of duties, responsibilities, and expectations.

- *Invest in Technology and Infrastructure* – Utilize advanced technologies such as GIS mapping, real-time data analytics, and interoperable communication systems to enhance shared situational awareness that fosters active, engaged, and timely decision-making.
- *Promote Interagency Training and Exercises* – Facilitate regular joint training opportunities and challenging interagency exercises to build trust, improve coordination, validate capabilities, and identify potential gaps in response plans.
- *Engage with the Community* – Establish open lines of communication with community leaders and organizations. Involve them in planning efforts and provide them with the tools and resources to assist in crisis response.
- *Implement a Continuous Improvement Process* – After each incident, conduct thorough after-action reviews, gather feedback from all stakeholders, implement improvement plans, and update plans and protocols accordingly. Continuously seek opportunities for improvement and innovation.
- *Effective Partnerships* – Active and engaged relationships are the foundation of effective organizational partnerships. In an e-mail to the author on July 19, 2024, Jim Overman, retired manager of Environmental, Safety, and Security for the Dow Chemical Company in Freeport, Texas, shared a reminder, "Unified command is much more than just having commanders in the same room. It is a shared responsibility for meeting shared objectives."

By taking these steps, emergency managers can enhance their preparedness and resilience in the face of civil disobedience, civil unrest, tactical ultra-violence, and home-grown terrorism. The road ahead will be challenging, but with a coordinated and proactive approach, emergency managers and public safety professionals can navigate these turbulent times and improve the safety and well-being of communities.

Commander Joseph Leonard is president of the Unified Services Consulting Group, LLC. He retired from the U.S. Coast Guard after 30 years of service. He is a Certified Emergency Manager and holds the Coast Guard Emergency Management Credential. He currently serves as the president of the Region 6 Chapter of the International Association of Emergency Managers and is an Advisor on the Preparedness Leadership Council. CDR Leonard has a master's degree from Murray State University and a bachelor's degree from the Virginia Military Institute. He serves as an Advisor to the *Domestic Preparedness Journal*.


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