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#2217: Basic Incident Management in Transportation (Tobias Goldberg)

MESSAGE: (#2217) Basic Incident Management in Transportation
<<http://www.ntoctalks.com/talkingops/index.cgi?rev=2217>>
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Seems like most ITS & Transportation folks avoid this subject.
Some fear change, afraid it distracts from other responsibilities.
Could be it is hard to explain the importance of subject to others.
Maybe it is not knowing where to start.

Here is a report I wrote some time back.
I hope it is helpful to those interested.

Basic Incident & Emergency Management in Transportation

The events of September 11th, 2001 and the following events surrounding hurricane Katrina & Rita shocked the entire country. This has forced the Emergency management community and transportation agencies to review and change their incident management operations and policies. Transportation agencies have been required to reassess their experiences with incident management to properly determine capability and responsibility to events that can cause major disruptions.

It should be recognized that Police, Fire, & EMS services across the country function nearly the same. Whether it is state, regional, county, or city services, they often operate under national and state standards. Often only subtle political or jurisdictional differences exist in how these services are provided.

Transportation agencies, however; have drastically different functions across the country. Services provided by transportation agencies may vary greatly on jurisdiction and political organization. Authority or responsibility may vary greatly also. Transportation agencies will also use private contractors & consultants to a greater extent than other emergency services. In regard to Traffic Management Centers, these facilities greatly differ across the country as well. Differences in how they are formed, jurisdictional boundaries & the extent to which they are prepared for emergency incident management functions as well as normal traffic management duties will often determine their capabilities.

The U.S. DOT guideline for basic responsibilities in transportation incident management includes the following: Detection, Verification, Response, Clearance, & Recovery.

The Incident Command System:

ICS has been in use by many organizations to include the military, civil law enforcement, and other groups for a top-down organizational approach to incident management. Some organizations have used systems such as Crisis Management which possesses many of the same basic principles of ICS. There has been a difficulty with adopting ICS by transportation agencies with only a limited history of designated incident management responsibilities by field personnel and/or involvement by Traffic Management Centers.

The current ICS guidelines originated from the 1970's FIREScope (Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies), which organized many agencies in an effort to combat wildfires. This effort went into an "all-risk" "all-agency" model for ICS.

Federal law requiring the use of ICS was established under SARA (Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act) of 1986, directing OSHA to establish rules for operations with hazardous materials incidents. OSHA Rule 1910.120, effective March 6, 1990, requires that all organizations that handle hazardous materials use ICS.

Also, the EPA requires non-OSHA states to use ICS at hazardous materials incidents.

The National Response Plan:

The events of 2001 have also brought on the creations of the National Response Plan. This organized the management of "incidents of national consequence", continuity of government operations, and sets standards or guidelines for all states to follow.

Within this plan developed the NIMS (National Incident Management System) guiding the use of ICS for all incident management in an "all-hazard" "all-risk" & "all-agencies" response plan. The adoption of the NIMS structure is mandated by Presidential Executive order and future federal preparedness funding to state and local government agencies is dependent on compliance by 2006.

The U.S. DOT with the National Fire Service Incident Management Consortium (NFSIMC) has developed a Model Procedures Guide for Highway Incidents. This guide was developed recognizing local DOT & TMC involvement with incident management and gives a detailed overview of all incident management activities, ICS structures, and probable organization structures for all incident types. The guide covers small level incidents such as crashes and major incidents such as disasters and acts of terrorism.

This is a relatively new procedures guide and the application of which may take some time to actually impact the way current operations are conducted.

With these standards in effect there will now be a universal system across all jurisdictional & professional areas. U.S. DOT, FEMA, NFA, Federal, local, & tribal government agencies with Law enforcement, EMS/Fire Dept, or other emergency services will now operate within this universal system. Tactical issues of operation remain in control of the respected agencies mission or authority.

Operations:

Transportation Operations/Management Centers may function much as a local Emergency Operations Center during an incident. The role of the TMC is to provide strategic support with Intelligent Transportation Systems, communications, logistics, and coordination of resources. The TMC may initiate proactive or predefined actions and dispatch appropriate resources. The TMC may act to implement or determine operational planning, policy, legal, financial, and political issues. The TMC may act as interagency coordinator and also provide public information. The TMC may also have to take actions to enforce the ICS process among other agencies. With the incident commander in the field made aware of all actions and directions made by the TMC personnel.

It is an important point to emphasize that "Incident Command" comes from the field. Field personnel must be able to show leadership and competence in order to successfully conduct operations. The incident commander is a "decision maker". Operational tactics, equipment, and resources are the incident commander's responsibility to request or direct.

NIMS & ICS incident management standards should be considered for highway construction operations and special events as well, for life safety and event accountability. Construction & Special Events groups are responsible for planned incidents that may have just as negative an impact on the transportation system as would a major incident.

Training:

With this emphasis on emergency incident management for the mainstream community, FEMA provides training online through independent study courses and other training opportunities. FEMA training is also available through state & local emergency management agencies.

The current courses that are of high value to transportation personnel are Basic Incident Command, NIMS, & Introduction to the National Response Plan. Basic incident command has the most relevance, as it comprises dialog & actions most often used for incident management by transportation personnel. NIMS & NRP give a larger picture overview of major incident management concepts and the external involvement of expanded incidents.

Other course work available from FEMA to note is the Professional Development Series.

This series is comprised of seven independent study courses with good general overview of emergency management, mitigation, planning, & operations. After completion of the required courses, transcripts and certificates are sent to the state emergency management agency to award and recognize for the series completion. Also available from FEMA, through state emergency management agencies, is the Applied Professional Development Series. This is comprised of a total of 10 classroom-only courses, five required courses and five elective courses for completion and recognition award.

It should be emphasized the value of classroom training as it does place the student in an interactive environment with peers from other areas, agencies, & disciplines.

The "hands on" effect in the training as well as open dialog on the subject matter makes the understanding and application of the principles more relevant to the individual's responsibilities. It is also helpful in understanding the

perspective and responsibilities of other agencies and professional personnel.

For future success in transportation incident management, time and resources for planning & training must be devoted. Establishing better dialoged within transportation agencies and the customers they must work with will also go a long way for improved operations. This requires participation from field personnel, TMC operators, and the members of management in the agency. With support, participation, and recognition of incident management responsibilities & duties, transportation agencies may better serve the public interest.

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