Incident Command System for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

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Preparedness

- Apathy is the greatest obstacle that a nation, hospital or department needs to overcome to be prepared for an incident/disaster

“Interest in disaster preparedness is proportional to the recency and magnitude of the last disaster”

Now, post-SARS, before winter 2003-2004, is the window of opportunity to raise awareness and preparedness
Incident Planning Strategy

Two observations

• Incidents/disasters produce unexpected challenges that call for flexibility and innovation

• Though each incident/disaster is different, there are patterns and problems that occur with such regularity that they are predictable

Two prong-approach

• Plan for what is likely

• Prepare for planned improvisation

Incident Command System (ICS)
History of ICS

• Autumn of 1970: over 13 days, a series of fires in Southern California
  • Ravaged 600,000 acres of land
  • Destroyed 772 buildings
  • Killed 16 persons

• Many agencies and services from city, county, state and federal jurisdictions were involved in fighting the fires
History of ICS

- Post-incident debrief identified these inter-agency coordination problems
  - Lack of common organization
  - Poor on-scene and inter-agency coordination
  - Inadequate joint planning
  - Lack of valid and timely access to information
  - Inadequate resource management
History of ICS

• 1972: consortium of city, county, state and federal agencies formed to resolve inter-agency coordination problems
  • Incident Command System developed as a standardized emergency incident management program
• Versions and principles of ICS have been adapted for use in emergency and rescue services and in hospitals
Definition of ICS

• An inter-agency incident management tool for
  • Commanding
  • Controlling and
  • Coordinating

• the efforts of different agencies as they work towards the common goal of stabilizing an emergency in order to
  • Protect life
  • Protect property and
  • Protect the environment
Structure of ICS

- Unity of command
- Unified command structure
- Common terminology
- Modular organization
- Consolidated incident action plans
- Integrated communications
- Manageable span of control

A common organizational structure
Key management principles in a standardized way
For ICS to work...

- The process of ICS-hospital disaster planning is more important than the written document that results.
- Once a written document is produced, regular exercises enhances familiarity with the plan.
Incident Management

Commanding, controlling and coordinating the efforts of different agencies means:

- Establishing command
- Ensuring responder safety
- Assessing incident priorities
- Determining operational objectives
- Developing, implementing the Incident Action Plan
- Developing appropriate organizational structure
- Maintaining a manageable span of control
- Managing resources
- Coordinating activities of outside agencies
- Authorizing information release to media
- Keeping track of costs
Functions of ICS

- Incident Command
  - Information
    - Safety
    - Liaison
  - Planning Section
  - Operations Section
  - Logistics Section
  - Finance / Admin Section
Incident Commander

- Establish an Incident Command Post
- Establish immediate priorities
- Determine objectives, strategy, tactical direction
- Monitor scene safety
- Establish and monitor incident organization
- Implement Incident Action Plans
- Approves requests for and release of resources
- Authorizes information release to media
- Command staff – information, safety, liaison
Incident Commander

TTSH CEO Dr SW Lim

- Assertive
- Decisive
- Objective
- Calm
- Quick thinker

ED Chief Dr E Seow

- Adaptable
- Flexible
- Realistic
- Able to delegate
Incident Command Post

- The “Nerve Centre” where Incident Commander is located
- Away from the “action” and in safety, BUT
- Identifiable and accessible to the necessary staff
Command Staff

- Information officer
  - Handles media inquiries and release of information to media
- Safety officer
  - Monitors safety and develops measures to ensure safety
- Liaison officer(s)
  - Contact for other agencies involved in the incident
Planning Section

- Collection, evaluation and dissemination of information about development of the incident and use of resources
- Creation of Incident Action Plan

TTSH Emergency Physicians

TTSH Chiefs
Operations Section

• Direct and coordinate all operations
• Ensure safety of operations and frontline staff
• Assist Incident Commander in developing goals and objectives
• Implement the Incident Action Plan
• Request or release resources through Incident Commander
• Update Incident Commander
Logistics Section

- Provides facilities, services and materials to support the frontline responders
- Especially important in an extended incident
Finance / Administrative Section

- Tracking incident costs and reimbursement accounting

TTSH Finance Staff

ED Administrative Staff
Benefits of ICS

- Prevents chaos
- Prevents individualism
- Ensures safety, prevents injury and further damage
- Prevents prolongation of incident
Drawbacks of ICS

• Time and labor intensive to develop and plan
• Terminology intensive
• Paper and form intensive
• Requires training for entire department / hospital
• Requires buy-in from entire department / hospital
Summary

• Incident preparedness means
  • Plan for what is likely
  • Prepare for planned improvisation

• Principles of ICS are
  • A common organizational structure: unity of command and a unified command
  • Key management principles in a standardized way

• The process of ICS-hospital disaster planning is more important than the written document that results

• Once a written document is produced, regular exercises enhances familiarity with the plan
Thank You