In a Hostile Environment? Skills Needed for Success

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ABSTRACT

The response landscape is changing as a result of social, political and technological influences. The Incident Commander's work environment, driven by today's 24/7 media and social media coverage, can become hostile. The frequency of incidents that raise public concern has increased. It is no longer sufficient for responders to manage the response. They must also ensure stakeholders are invested in the response process, but there is a gap between stakeholder's wants and what responders can realistically deliver. What are the appropriate skills and training needed by Incident Commanders to address this gap? What are the skills responders need when some individuals or organizations fan public fear, anger, and frustration to advance their own causes? What are the skills responders need to build public trust in the response organization and Government? The Coast Guard is committed to meeting the training needs of responders and preparing them to meet the demands of today's challenging, and potentially hostile, response environment. The authors identify skills for Incident Commanders to improve their crisis leadership, community engagement, and to increase the effectiveness and resiliency of their Incident Management Teams.

INTRODUCTION

Coast Guard emergency responders face greater challenges than ever before in achieving a successful response to an incident. In fact, success is difficult to define. Coast Guard's doctrine on "Incident Management and Crisis Response (CG Pub 3-28, 2013) says:

> *Response success is no longer measured merely in terms of operational success. With 24-hour cable and Internet news cycles, almost any incident... has the potential to become an event, garnering national public, media, or political interest.... Unsatisfactory response to the event may garner criticism even if the incident was correctly managed and all adverse consequences were successfully avoided.*
>
> (Executive Summary, *p. v*)

The message from the Commandant of the Coast Guard to his responders is clear. Admiral Zukunft's expectation is that Incident Commanders will manage both the operational execution of the "incident", and the broader "event" that exists beyond the scope of operations.(USCG Pub 3-28, 2014) Managing the incident alone is not enough. For example, after John F. Kennedy Jr.'s plane crashed off the coast of Massachusetts, the search and rescue operation that ensued was straightforward. The Coast Guard and other agencies launched a Search and Rescue response in accordance with policy. However, unlike most searches, the political pressure, extensive media coverage, and high public interest, required additional attention from the Unified Command. These circumstances created an event beyond the scope of the incident. These "crisis events" are more challenging and complex to manage.

Managing crisis events requires specialized skills that are not necessarily intuitive. Incident Commanders, and Unified Command when utilized, must have the personal and institutional capacity to build trust and confidence with skeptical or even hostile stakeholders. They need to be adept at communicating effectively with leadership and other stakeholders external to the event, including the media and the public. They must also clearly articulate facts and the limits of response capabilities. Finally, they should be mentally prepared to handle conflict and perceived failure.

These skills are not explicitly taught in traditional National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) training. However, the next generation of Incident Commanders recognize the need for these skills and are eager to learn them.(USCG, 2016) The objective of this paper is to identify how the Coast Guard can better prepare its responders to manage crisis events and meet the expectations of the Commandant, especially in a hostile environment. The Coast Guard is committed to equipping crisis responders the skills needed in the areas of crisis leadership and stakeholder engagement.

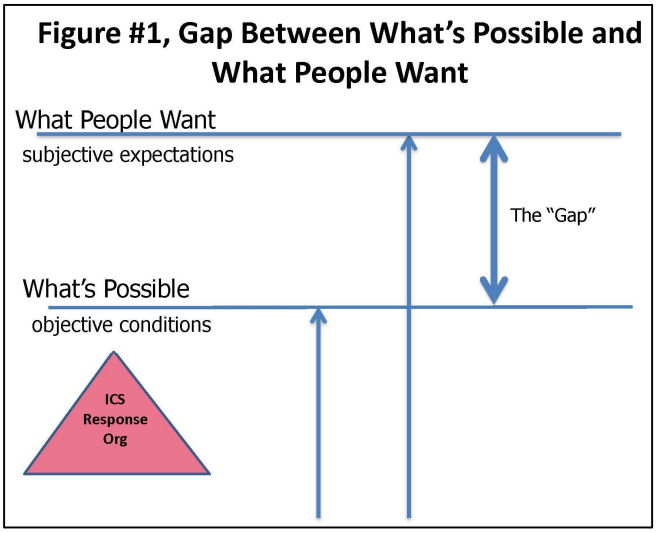
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Today's emergency responders often face a hostile environment. The term "hostile environment" describes a situation where one or more of the parties external to the response organization, collectively known as stakeholders, create conflict or openly condemn the response. Not all responses involve a hostile environment but there is the potential on every incident to encounter adversarial stakeholders. A hostile environment could lead to loss of the public's trust and confidence, resulting in the response being perceived as a failure. The pressure to have the response viewed in a positive light is a top concern for responders, and the federal agencies they

represent. (Austin, 2016) Their concerns are warranted as a number of Coast Guard Incident Commanders have been relieved for failing to adequately address stakeholder concerns. This was the case during the COSCO BUSAN oil spill in San Francisco, California. The initial Incident Commander was relieved in the wake of agency concerns that information was not released to the public as quickly as it should have been. (Fagen, Bulwa, Coile, 2007)

A hostile environment can be created through a number of different scenarios. One cause of a hostile environment is stakeholder expectations that are different than, or incompatible with, the response objectives developed by the Unified Command. Stakeholders may have different opinions regarding what is achievable in the response and have little motivation to compromise or resolve differences. Figure 1 illustrates this concept. The triangle represents a response organization, comprised of all of the positions that fill the Incident Management Team

Figure #1, Gap Between What's Possible and What People Want



(IMT). The IMT would develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) based on the on-scene situation. They would determine the limit of "What's Possible" after considering the capabilities of the responders and the equipment available to the response. The upper line represents "What People

Want", or the expectations of stakeholders. These expectations are often based on assumptions, or other subjective information. The space between "What's Possible" and "What People Want" denotes a possible gap between stakeholder expectations and what is actually feasible.

Adding to the challenge, a hostile environment may also stem from a lack of trust between stakeholders and the response organization. Scientific facts may be rejected due to mistrust of government officials, scientists, or industry. This was the case after the 2015 Gold King Mine release impacted the Animas River running through the Navajo Nation. The Navajo government was unwilling to accept water quality measurements from the Environmental Protection Agency because they blamed the agency for causing the release in the first place.

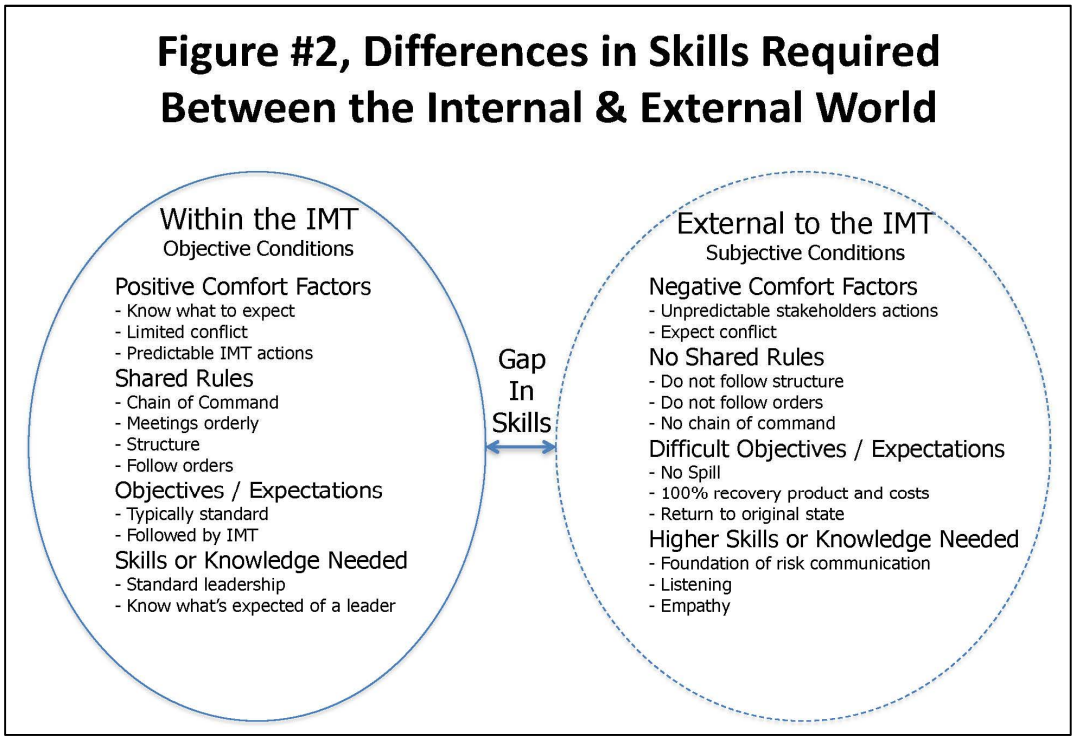
Worst of all, facts may be ignored if they are incongruent with stakeholder motives. This situation arose during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010. Parish Presidents in Louisiana demanded control of spending, based on their previous experiences with the reimbursement process from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during hurricanes. However, oil spills are funded differently than hurricanes. Legislation does not allow funds to be managed in the same way. The expectations of the presidents and the pressure on them to get results for their constituencies created friction with the IMT. (Lloyd, 2009) These are examples of incidents where stakeholders refused to acknowledge facts in order to continue to bring both attention and resources to their causes. The trend today seems to be to sensationalize; increase the scale, the number of clicks, and the sheer noise created by the event. (Packer, 2013)

A hostile environment may also result from stakeholders having unrealistic expectations of support from the response organization. Stakeholders who are impacted by incidents have come to expect compensation from the responsible party and emergency relief from the government. Support provided to victims by the government on large-scale incidents, such as

Hurricane Katrina, set high expectations for future assistance. An extreme example is flood victims who expect replacement value for homes built in flood plains. These homeowners are aware of the risks of building in these areas, and yet they still expect the government to cover their losses in the event of flood damage. To counter this trend towards government dependency, FEMA is placing more emphasis on fostering community resiliency and individual initiative.

When the environment turns hostile the Unified Command is no longer managing just the incident, they are now managing the crisis event too. In a crisis event, the stakeholders are most likely not playing by the rules of ICS. Members of the response community share a common understanding of the principles of ICS based on NIMS ICS doctrine. They build relationships with each other during preparedness activities such as training, exercises, and contingency plan development. Stakeholders that do not participate in these preparedness activities, and are not required to use ICS.

Figure #2 illustrates the differences between what a responder would experience in managing an incident versus managing a crisis event. The left side represents the world



internal to the IMT, where Incident Commanders are operating in familiar territory. This is the world of ICS, with shared rules, objectives, and skills consistent with their NIMS ICS training. On the right, the parameters of managing the stakeholder relationships external to the IMT, called the crisis event. This is unfamiliar territory for most Incident Commanders because stakeholder actions are unpredictable and there are no shared rules or expectations.

There is a gap in skills for Incident Commanders between these two worlds. The skills needed to effectively manage an in incident within an IMT are different than those needed to manage the external crisis event. Responders in the U.S. are trained and qualified in ICS based on standards set by FEMA. However, there is no routine training for how responders should deal with today's hostile environment and the unrealistic expectations that are placed on the IMT. The majority of emergency management training available to responders focuses on properly executing the operational planning process and developing an IAP. These are only the tactical aspects for managing the incident, and do not address the larger crisis event. Most emergency management training does not teach responders to be crisis leaders or provide them with soft skills such as negotiation or crisis communications.

Many Incident Commanders also struggle with how tackle management objectives. Management objectives are those objectives set by the Unified Command that do not require tactical resources to accomplish. Examples of such objectives include developing a Stakeholder Management Plan, or identifying an information management process. Most emergency management training and exercises address management objectives with a cursory nod. Unfortunately, responders do not get the opportunity to practice executing these management

objectives because they are more focused on the operational planning process than with the end goal of developing an IAP.

APPROACH

Feedback from students in the Coast Guard ICS-410 Incident Commander course shows that they lack confidence in their ability to demonstrate crisis leadership and engage with stakeholder effectively during a response.(USCG, 2016) When considered from a Human Performance Technology (HPT) perspective, this is a performance gap. The basic premise of HPT is that the best worker in the world is not successful if they do not have the right tools and organizational support for their activities. Conversely, the best tools and organizational support do not guarantee stellar performance if the worker is incapable of doing the job. Good performance is only achieved when there is synergy between the worker, the work, and the workplace. (USCG Training SOP, 2011)

To determine the causes of this performance gap and develop recommendations for addressing the causes, the authors culled information from a number of different sources. First is the 2013 ICS Occupational Front-End Analysis.(USCG, FEA, 2013) The Coast Guard does not develop training without first conducting an analysis on what is causing the problem. The analysis team collected input from over 40 ICS experts and developed a comprehensive picture of how the ICS program could be improved using the Instructional Systems Development and Peak Performance System model.(USCG, FEA, 2013) Their findings were organized into general categories including; knowledge, skills and information, effective work environment, motivation or incentive, and assignment or selection. (USCG ICS FEA, 2013) For the purposes

of this paper, only the lack of knowledge, skills and information were considered because the other findings are outside the scope of the Coast Guard training system.

The authors also collected lessons learned from After Action Reports and Incident Specific Preparedness Reviews from numerous U.S. incidents over the past decade ranging from oil spills to hurricanes and terrorism. Additional guidance was collected from other organizations in the emergency management field, such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the Harvard National Preparedness Leadership Institute. Finally, feedback was collected from students in Coast Guard ICS classes via course evaluation forms, and from current and previous Incident Commanders through personal interviews. Information from all of these sources was consolidated to create a comprehensive list of skills and actions required by responders to survive and thrive in a hostile response environment.

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Coast Guard doctrine distinguishes between an incident and a crisis event.(USCG Pub 3-28, 2013) Complex crisis events demand a higher level of crisis leadership, especially if they involve a hostile environment. The authors found that the skills and actions required to manage the crisis event fell into three general categories. The first category includes individual crisis leadership skills that should be cultivated by responders to make them good crisis leaders. The second category includes skills required to engage externally with stakeholders and maintain their trust and confidence. The third category encompasses actions for Incident Commanders for developing an IMT that can withstand, or even counter, a hostile environment.

1. Individual Skills Development:

This paper is centered primarily on the Incident Commander, and what he or she needs to combat or endure a hostile environment. However, these skills are valuable to other members of the IMT who fill a leadership position or engage with stakeholders, including; Deputy Incident Commanders, Public Information Officers, Liaison Officers, or Agency Representatives. They are also relevant skills for members senior to the Incident Commander, such as Area Commanders, Principal Federal Officials, or Agency Executives.

Table 1 notes some individual skills that have been identified. These crisis leadership skills are a unique skillset above and beyond that of normal leaders and managers. They highlight some of the more challenging aspects of being an Incident Commander, such as the initial ramp-up and the transition back to normal operations, or long-term recovery. Unfortunately, NIMS does not have clear guidance or processes for these transition periods. Incident Commanders must be prepared to make decisions early in the incident without having all of the information. These key decisions include, but are not limited to, the location of the incident command post (ICP), the makeup of the IMT, and processes to be used. Referencing established plans or policies can help the Incident Commander make these decisions. (USCG Cosco Busan ISPR, 2008)

Table 1: Individual Skills Development

Plan for Transitions	Discuss and plan for transitions. The most difficult times for an IMT on a response are the initial ramp-up and the transition back to normal operations (or long-term recovery). Take swift action to mobilize and notify. Mobilized resources can always be stood down.
Make decisions	Make decisions early on about what "trigger points" should initiate standing up an IMT. Accept that decisions will have to be made with limited information. Decide which functions will remain with the normal organization and which will be handled by the IMT. On the back-end of the incident, establish key success factors, and how they will be measured, to assist with the demobilization process.

Demonstrate integrity	Take a stand for what is right. This is often expressed in the phrase "truth to power". Do not be influenced by stakeholders that are demanding unfair advantages or giving gifts. Be transparent and forthright with why decisions are made.
Ask for help early especially for external engagement	Ask for help early (in terms of resources, staff, surge forces and special teams). Consider the staffing needed for multiple work shifts. It is better to request and turn people away than to need people and not have them. Ensure that IMT members are comfortable requesting staff support as needed.
Build relationship with supervisors	Request clear expectations from supervisors about decision-making authority and information reporting. Maintaining a good relationship with your supervisor is extremely important to ensuring their trust and confidence in you. Request help with external engagement from the chain of command as needed (i.e. Agency Representative or Area Commander).
Ensure self-care and good time management	Follow rules for self-care (i.e. 21 day max for Strike Team deployment, max work hours per day). Practice self-preservation to avoid "going to the basement" (NPLI, internet extraction Dec 2016) and allowing extreme fatigue to impact decision-making ability.
Manage time carefully	An Incident Commander has many competing demands for a limited amount of time. How that time is allocated sends a message to stakeholders about perceived priorities. The Incident Commander should spend 60-70% of their time focused externally (i.e., conference calls with stakeholders, press briefs, visiting impacted communities). The remaining 30-40% of their time should be spent focusing internally on the IMT (i.e., planning process meetings, approving the IAP, managing staff).(Austin, M, Nov 2016)
Maintain self-awareness and self-regulation	Self-awareness and self-regulation are personal leadership skills from the Meta-Leadership model noted by the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative (NPLI, internet extraction Dec 2016).
Practice facilitation and negotiation skills	Facilitation ensures that the group's objectives are met effectively with clear thinking, good participation and full buy-in from everyone involved. Negotiation refers to the ability to work well with other people to find common ground and determine a way forward that works for all parties. In a response, the ability to negotiate on key issues is critical.(Bens, I, 2012)
Project quiet confidence	Maintain composure when addressing stakeholders. Don't allow inflammatory remarks to distract from the task at hand. People may be afraid and looking for a leader to reassure them.

2. External Engagement

Community stakeholder engagement is perhaps the most critical factor in preventing and responding to a hostile environment. Table 2 describes several key skills or efforts that the IMT leadership must be able to achieve in order to be successful in external engagement.

Table 2: Community Engagement Skills

Identify Stakeholders and including Local/trusted people	Identify range of stakeholders and those external engagements that require direct involvement of the Incident Commander vice delegating down to IMT members. Find local/trusted people to relate/communicate (i.e., faith based leaders, state agency representatives, or trusted community members).
Build Relationships	Proactively engage local elected officials (mayors, county commissioners, senators, representatives) and local emergency managers (emergency management directors, State on-Scene Coordinators, police & fire chiefs) and committees (Local Emergency Planning Committees, Port Readiness Committees, State Emergency Response Commissions, Regional Response Teams). These stakeholders have local valuable local knowledge.(USCG, Pub 3-28, 2013)
Engage Stakeholders including whole community engagement	Engage as early as possible with stakeholders during a response and establish rules of engagement for media, stakeholders, and the public. Use Risk Communications best practices.(Sheppard, B., Janoske, M., Liu, B., 2012) Develop a Stakeholder Outreach Plan to identify all of the relevant stakeholders, especially those with great influence, and establish a strategy for communicating with them to provide them the information they need, when they need it. This plan would generally be developed by the Liaison Officer and may be based on a Crisis Management Plan, if one has been developed.(Sheppard, B., Janoske, M., Liu, B., 2012)
Break Down Barriers to Trust	Whole community engagement, empowerment and interaction: (USCG, Pub 3-28, 2013) Collaborate. Be relevant to what people care about.(Walker, A.H., Scholz, D. & Ott, G., 2014)
Conduct Media Outreach	Engage with the media early in the response. Proactively push information out to “control the narrative”. Understand the value of media relations training in developing and delivering key messages to stakeholders.(USCG, ISPR, M/V Cosco Busan, 2008) The Incident Commander should develop the key messages early in the process(USCG, ISPR, M/V Cosco Busan, 2008) with the assistance of the Public Information Officer (PIO) or Joint Information Center (JIC). The PIO should provide the Incident Commander with lists of potential media questions so that the Incident Commander can tailor the responses to support the key messages.

Pass Guidance or Requests to the Public	Provide information and guidance to stakeholders, especially the public, from more than one source, via various means, and on multiple occasions. For example, people are more likely to follow flood evacuation orders if they hear the message from various sources on different types of media, and more than one time.(Sheppard, B., Janoske, M., Liu, B., 2012) Based on an assessment of the state of mind of the public, give calming words before giving instructions. Make specific requests of the public to give them focus (i.e., ask the public to check on and assist neighbors).
Conduct empathic listening	To determine the objectives of the stakeholders or to determine the root cause of their fear or concern. Express sympathy for those who have been impacted. Behavior should reflect a solemn demeanor (i.e. similar to attending a funeral). Acknowledge strong emotions that may be triggered.
Present numbers effectively	When presenting numbers to the media, follow-up by providing them in writing to ensure accuracy. Present risk in terms of percentages (i.e. 25% of people exposed could be affected) rather than probabilities (i.e. 25 of every 100 people exposed could be affected). This is based on heuristic behavioral studies.(Sheppard, B., Janoske, M., Liu, B., 2012)
Conduct crisis communications	Crisis communication is about managing the meaning behind information during a crisis. It differs from risk communication in that risks could play out over a long period of time whereas a crisis generally occurs within a shorter timeframe. Also, the sources of risk communications are generally scientists and experts (i.e. relaying air monitoring results) as opposed to crisis communications, which are generally authority figures (i.e. Incident Commander or community leader). Employ risk communication tactics (i.e., evocation of negative/positive effect, alignment of response values with community values) to influence how stakeholders view risk and the likelihood of the public to follow instructions. (Sheppard, B., Janoske, M., Liu, B., 2012)

Further guidance for stakeholder engagement can be found in international standards and workbooks that detail the entire collaborative process from problem identification, establishing objectives, identifying stakeholders, building communication and collaborative decision-making skills. One common international standard is AA1000 Account Ability's "Stakeholder Engagement Standard" (AccountAbility, 2015). Table 3 identifies the common Community Engagement Frameworks that Incident Commanders should strive to implement.

Table 3: Example Community Engagement Frameworks

Tasks	Processes
Defining Community Engagement Success	Develop a framework for community engagement that is based on cooperation, support, trust, confidence, and realistic expectations.
What Stakeholder Engagement Looks Like	Community trusts, has confidence, expectations are realistic, community leadership and stakeholders are engaged, communications are timely, and reliable information meets their needs.
Stakeholder Engagement Process	The ICS liaison function, trusted by both the community and the IMT, meets their needs.
Understanding Community & Stakeholder Issues	The IMT has developed a foundation for understanding of community and stakeholder needs and expectations.
Risk Communication	Engagement with the community and stakeholders based on skilled communication processes and trust.
Disaster and Community Resilience	Sustained ability of a community to use available resources to response to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations.

3. Building a Capable and Resilient IMT

To build a strong and effective IMT, an Incident Commander should take specific actions to ensure they will function well as a team in a crisis. The most important way to do this is by visibly trusting and supporting the team. Conversely, the IMT members must trust the leadership to lead them during the response. Table 4 lists considerations for developing and maintaining a healthy IMT.

Table 4: Skills for Developing an IMT

Trust and support IMT members	Trust IMT members to know their job and support them as they do their job. Provide coaching or position job aids to those members who are not confident in their positions. Recognize successes of the response or responders, even if the success appears minor, to maintain a positive command message.

Manage the transition of key personnel	Leaders should remain in position until transition of authority has occurred through the transfer of command process, including notifying the staff of the shift and documenting the change.
Identify management objectives	Identify management objectives for the incident along with operational objectives. Management objectives do not use tactical resources but they address the needs of the larger crisis event (i.e. stakeholder/media engagement, public outreach). Capture these objectives on the ICS-202 and track their completion on the on the ICS-233. Sample management objectives can be found in the Incident Management Handbook.
Staff the incident to properly manage external engagement	Current NIMS practice is to staff the incident based on the number of operational divisions and groups. This may not adequately address the need for IMT members to manage external engagement or other management objectives on the incident. Replace IMT members who are not meeting expectations and are unable to "catch up" quickly.
Be prepared to handle diverse administrative requirements	Know the rules for managing different types of personnel (GS civilians, reserve forces, auxiliary or volunteer members, contractors and special teams). Expect to use different methods to track labor and adhere to different personnel policies. For example, GS civilians are not required to work over weekends unless outlined in their Position Description. Admin control of special teams should remain with the supporting command.
Know and use contingency plans	Following local or regional plans protects the IMT from outside criticism. Deviation from approved plans and policies should be well justified and documented in the ICS-214 or other means.
Deploy external engagement members early	Deploy external engagement members (Assistant Liaison Officers, Agency Representatives, Assistant Public Information Officer, etc.) early and ensure they have access to Unified Command. Send Assistant Liaison Officers or Agency Representatives to Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) and embed them with other key stakeholder groups (i.e. port pilots, port authority, NOAA) to expedite and improve information sharing.

Conduct consistent and accurate information management	Communicate frequently and consistently with stakeholders (including the public and the media). Ensure information is reliable, accurate, and timely.(USCG, Pub 3-28, 2013) Quickly and publicly correct any misinformation provided by the IMT. Require all Unified Command members to attend press briefings. Require other IMT members to attend press briefings if they have the best handle on the information and have them stand behind the Incident Commander. Gain a sense of the public's general attitude toward the situation and tailor presentations accordingly. Are they worried and in need of reassurance? Are they sanguine and in need of a warning? Are they angry and in need of calming? Gauge the impact of certain words and be cautious using them (i.e. crisis, life-threatening).
Maintain credibility	Maintain credibility – including the culture of service and lifesaving.
Select appropriate staff for assignments	Be strategic in assignment of external staff (i.e. consider assigning a full time Assistant Liaison Officer to certain stakeholders who may become hostile). Consider the audience and try to assign Liaison Officers that will be well-received by the group or demographic (i.e. matching rank or background)
Consider responder resiliency	Take care of your people and yourself. Request Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) for hostile environments. Gauge the morale of the team and find ways to lighten the mood in meetings. Consider creature comforts for responders (i.e. snacks available, creating a quiet space for decompressing during breaks). Solicit and acknowledge suggestions from team.
Establish processes early and Create Standard Operating Guides	Establish processes early through the use of special plans (resource requesting, cost tracking, information management, external communications, stakeholder outreach, demobilization). Unit leaders and Section Chief should develop Standard Operating Guides for their units/sections that outline expectations for staff, and document processes specific to their staff (work hours, relief process, documentation requirements, etc.).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"During a crisis, good leadership entails understanding the environment, controlling the narrative, building consensus, using the whole team, and planning transitions." (CG Pub 3-28, 2014)

The response landscape is constantly changing as a result of social, political and technological influences. A Coast Guard Incident Commander must be skilled in crisis leadership and should be prepared to face potentially hostile environments during a response. They must look beyond the operational incident and also consider the larger crisis event.

How do we institutionalize some of these crisis leadership and external engagement skills and actions? Following the Coast Guard training model, once recommendations are identified during a performance analysis, the analysts then determine the best intervention to address each recommendation. The different types of interventions include training, job aids, coaching, clearer position descriptions, feedback systems, clear performance standards, additional resources, changing organizational values and culture, doctrine and procedures, or incentives. (USCG Training SOP, 2011)

The Contingency Preparedness and Response Management School at Coast Guard Training Center Yorktown overhauled the Coast Guard's Incident Commander Course (ICS-410) and the Incident Commander Job Aid after the 2013 Front-end Analysis. The course was updated to include three new units; Coordination with Stakeholders, Coordination with Agency Executive (the Incident Commander's boss), and Coordination with the Public. At the same time, a new unit, titled Support to Stakeholders, was added to the Incident Commander Job Aid. The Schoolhouse should review the ICS-410 course and the job aid again to ensure all of the skills identified in this paper are covered. Additionally, the Schoolhouse should adopt the practice of

reviewing all lessons learned from large-scale incidents to determine if any of the lessons can be used to improve Coast Guard training.

What is the next step? These skills should be incorporated into NIMS ICS doctrine and policy. The authors recommend first updating the Best Response model (Kuchin, J.T., & Hereth, L.K., 1999) to align with Harvard's National Preparedness Leadership Initiative (NPLI) Meta-leadership model.(Marcus, L.J., & McNulty, E.J., 2010) The new Best Response model should include factors external to the incident that are managed as part of the crisis event. The model should be expanded to include practical measures that address positive press and positive stakeholder engagement as well as an emphasis on preparedness activities.

The authors also recommend updating NIMS to address crisis leadership, external engagement, and IMT management. NIMS should include practical guidance for addressing management objectives on a response, including how to staff the IMT appropriately to handle these objectives. Finally, NIMS should place more emphasis on managing transitions at the beginning and end of a response since these aspects of the response are particularly challenging for most IMT's.

These steps will ensure that the Incident Commanders of tomorrow are equipped to handle the most complex, and potentially hostile, response environments. While, it is not reasonable to expect that future Incident Commanders will meet the expectations of every stakeholder on every response, providing these responders with a solid foundation of training and performance support could make them more resilient to these challenges in the face of the next crisis event.

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