

Involving law enforcement and emergency management officials in exercises

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ABSTRACT

This article reveals the benefits of having public sector participation in your exercises. It also outlines simple tips to having successful business continuity exercises for your organisation.

Keywords: *exercises, emergency management, law-enforcement, business continuity*

INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses how to incorporate law enforcement and emergency management officials into organisational training exercises and the benefits of doing so in the modern threat environment.

Simply put, involving law enforcement and emergency management officials creates a win-win situation. It better prepares the organisation for a smoke condition, hostile intruder or other any situation that requires a prompt response from outside public

entities. It also decreases inherent risks and improves the organisation's response to an emergency. Employees learn more about the law enforcement response and it strengthens the organisation's ties with emergency management. Information sharing is enhanced and all teams can learn about one another's practices.

Relationships are critical to success, and some of the most important liaisons to develop and foster are with law enforcement and emergency management. Security and business continuity professionals all agree that in a resource-constrained world that is growing evermore burdened with risk, interconnected partnerships are absolutely critical when it comes to mitigating risks. Exercising with public entities provides an environment in which to foster stronger relationships with the public and private sector.

Joint exercises provide an opportunity for law enforcement and emergency management to train in a realistic setting. Providing a high-rise venue or corporate campus in which the fire department can practise, for example, is invaluable for fire department personnel. With so few organisations providing space and scenarios in an exercise setting, an offer of coordination will likely be received with enhanced engagement.

Employees also benefit when emergency management and law enforcement

are incorporated into exercises. They recognise that the threat environment is changing and outside resources are needed in the event of an emergency. There is an additional sense of preparedness and they better understand the complexities of safeguarding employees during an emergency response and provide additional insight during the exercise debriefings. The comments of participating employees are often part of the after-action reports and they carry tremendous credibility.

A realistic scenario gives participants additional skills: it raises their confidence levels while reinforcing their sense that they have the expertise to be successful in an actual event. In addition, everyone has a better understanding of law enforcement and emergency management capabilities. What is their response time? How long does it take for them to get their resources in order? Do they know how to access the buildings? Do the organisation's protocols match or complement their protocols? How can you assist them during a crisis? Most, if not all, of these questions are answered in the after-action briefings conducted after each scenario.

Some organisations have developed excellent relationships with the local emergency services. Keep these relationships strong by sponsoring an annual breakfast or lunch meeting with representatives from the local emergency medical response and fire and police departments and inviting them to conduct training exercises at your sites. Not only will you learn how best to respond to incidents and utilise emergency services, but these responders will be more familiar with the layout of your site and better prepared to respond to an actual incident on the premises.

Several years ago, I developed a business continuity exercise and invited the local office of emergency management public officials to participate. Having presented a challenging scenario and developed the

lessons learned, we sat down together to hash out the responsibilities of each group and developed a closer relationship based on information sharing. Soon after the exercise was completed, an electric blackout caused both employee evacuation and delayed business operations. The foundation built during the exercise directly led to a more integrated approach during the blackout. From that time forward, we continued to work much more closely together. It was reaffirmed that we had common goals. In short, integrating law enforcement and emergency management safeguards life safety and enhances employee security/safety awareness.

The trend is convergence. Nicholas A. Smith, Jr., CPP, remarks that:

'We recognise that the approach Scott Shaw advocates, operationalising [business continuity] and security by aligning them and involving external agencies in exercising and planning adds tremendous value. Close collaboration with commercial real estate landlords and property management, as well as public authorities, helps ensure consistent and comprehensive emergency preparedness for the private sector.'

Risk professionals are increasingly needing to manage risk across the enterprise. The way to become a better risk manager is by being multi-dimensional — itself a valuable attribute in this competitive economy. Budgets are declining and it is increasingly apparent that convergence is required to add value to the organisation's bottom line. Convergence can save major budget dollars and lead not only to a more efficient group, but a team approach with law enforcement and emergency management professionals.

When the world of business resiliency starts at the top, it wins over the resources necessary to implement a successful exercise

involving emergency management and law enforcement. Without senior management support, it is often an uphill battle to obtain interest from various groups within an organisation to participate in exercises. Demonstrating value and resiliency will provide a strong foundation to increase the investment in exercises with emergency management and law enforcement.

In many organisations, the current threat is the active shooter or hostile intruder. Has your organisation invited trusted law enforcement to walk through your locations including access and exit points? Some organisations invite law enforcement into their buildings as soon as they open for business. This liaison effort pays big dividends when a disaster occurs and law enforcement or emergency management is needed. Whenever possible, one should forge relationships with public safety officials prior to the event, not afterwards.

Seek law-enforcement/fire/emergency management support and commitment to a joint exercise. They may need a venue to exercise their resources. Through planning meetings, it is possible to identify roles and plan for specifics. Share information and have an open mind to ideas shared. Be careful to fulfil their training requirements and be patient as they may need to obtain permissions or clearances through their organisation before embarking on a joint training mission.

We invite the fire department and fire marshals to observe our evacuation drills. Their mere presence reinforces the importance of the evacuation and they provide observations and areas of improvements. Including emergency officials gives your employees a sense of security and reassurance.

Learn what you can, too, about what others are doing in this critical area. Private/public emergency groups often post when an evacuation is taking place

at their respective building. This is a good opportunity to call the person in charge of the exercise and request to attend as an observer. This provides the opportunity to see what others are doing and report best practices back to your own programme.

Make sure that you have pre and post briefings prior to major exercises. Having a fire official participating, for example, adds learning, coordination and credibility to the briefings. Always have floor plans with specific locations for team members and review duties such as directing employees to safe areas of refuge. Post-briefings should allow all team members the ability to voice their opinion on how the drill went and address any concerns they may have. It is an opportunity to learn from mistakes and improve on future exercises.

John Leavey, Executive Director from AT-RISK International describes his experience developing relationships with the New York Fire Department:

‘Shortly after 9/11, I was brought on board as the Director of Domestic Security for a large Fortune 50 company located within New York’s Financial District. One of my first missions was to develop procedures for high-rise building emergency response and evacuation. The company’s headquarters building (located just off of Wall Street) was built in the 1930s and was over 60 stories high. Based on its construction and design, it came with its challenges to not only those that would need to oversee its evacuation but to the first responders trying to evaluate and manage the incident. It was soon determined after meeting with New York City’s Fire Department (FDNY) leadership that their department rarely had the opportunity to train within the confines of the buildings they were expected to respond to. Based on this realization, we opened our doors to not

only the senior FDNY leadership but would sponsor each graduating FDNY class with a luncheon and tour of our larger buildings. This assisted these new firemen with a firsthand understanding of what a high-rise looked like and specifically, the nuances of the old buildings located within the financial district. Annual exercises began to take place on a weekend and involved over a hundred NYC emergency service personnel as well as all company medical and security teams. Scenarios would include workplace shootings, arson, fires engulfing several floors and even chemical release incidents. The latter included on-site decontaminations with the company's Emergency Readiness Team working alongside the city's emergency decon units. Opening up our facilities to first responders was a win-win for both the company and the city services. I would unequivocally recommend this type of reciprocity between corporations and their local/state municipalities.'

Any organisation that has already established strong working relationships will find it easier to respond appropriately during a real emergency. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the business unit, security, law enforcement and business continuity worked together to enter a damaged building and test the data and ensure that the IT infrastructure was not damaged beyond repair. Each team segment was critical to the success of operation and thanks to the coordination, the building was reopened with the minimum of delay.

Adapt where necessary. Some resources are dismissed during the time of a disaster. A dismissive outlook by decision-makers can be detrimental to the recovery. Encourage team members, no matter their level, to be prepared to work together. During any

major event, the sense of team needs to be encouraged and fostered.

Below are some quick tips:

- *Ask questions and benchmark:* Find out what the public entities are doing to provide emergency response in the community. Attending Homeland Security sponsored briefings and training classes, provides critical information and provides a better understanding what approach they will take during an emergency. Ask specific questions pertinent to the emergency response programme. Also attend seminars and webinars sponsored by agencies.
- *Set specific goals and objectives:* Define a scope and keep goals and objectives to minimum. Two to three goals is much better than four or five goals. Avoid making the exercise too complex and check with public sector officials to ensure the organisation's goals match or align with the public sector officials' goals. If needs be, scale back to simplify the goals and objectives during the planning phase.
- *Seek local resources:* Most expertise is local and essential to make the exercise meaningful. An analysis of current trends may reveal threats that you did not know were relevant to your law enforcement/emergency management partners.
- *Plan step by step:* Inviting law enforcement to participate in an emergency response exercise reaps the most benefits if is done step by step. Start with tabletop exercises and then expand to full exercises as this provides insight into the participants' capabilities. These exercises are invaluable to learn how go through each step and identify the roles and responsibilities and adjust where necessary.
- *Public sector training:* Turn to external public agencies to provide employees

with training to become certified emergency response teams (CERT). Where possible, recruit CERT members to assist in the planning of the exercises, not just to participate in them.

- *Use an operation or command centre as a resource:* Many organisations have either permanent or temporary operations centre/command centres. Personnel in this environment are cognisant of situational awareness for incidents that may affect the organisation. Flip-charts and/or products are invaluable during exercises to record critical data for participants to see and respond to if needed.
- *Use reality-based training when possible:* Well-planned role-play exercises increase the participation rate and reinforce the

learning process. In a controlled environment, safety comes first and must be reinforced throughout the exercise. Safety protocols are in place and double-checked to ensure that there are no surprises. Over-communicate and maintain control. If necessary, seek the expertise of consultants who have the knowledge to training staff.

CONCLUSION

All efforts in this increasingly critical area will add meaning and depth to an organisation's exercises. Furthermore, the organisation's performance will be enhanced through coordination. Everyone will be better prepared for a major event.