

Chapter 3—Personnel Incident Safety

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Chapter 3

Personnel Incident Safety

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues facing the Incident Commander is personnel safety and accountability at the scene of emergencies. The top priority in every emergency is the safety of personnel.

Risk management evaluations should be constantly applied during an all-hazards incident response. In many cases, all-hazard response personnel may be assigned to a mission that could involve exposures that are unknown or unrecognized prior to their arrival on site. These hazards must be evaluated and mitigated in order to protect personnel.

Hazards which could be encountered may include: sewage; chemicals; biological wastes; downed power lines; poor or no communications; poisonous plants, animals and insects; mold; fungus; human and animal remains; exposure to infectious diseases; lack of traffic control; additional storms; and exposure to disaster victims often in desperate situations.

All teams should develop and utilize an emergency medical plan and it is the responsibility of the Incident Commander to ensure that all team members understand the procedures to implement the plan.

Procedures for Identification and Management of Life Hazards

Incident Commanders are responsible for the safety of all incident personnel and may have to take action to protect personnel from life threatening conditions that on-scene personnel and other responders do not have the capabilities, tools, or training to mitigate immediately. This responsibility begins with ensuring a Safety Officer is appointed.

Whenever a life hazard or an immediate threat to the health and safety of incident personnel is present at an incident, any person who recognizes the potential life hazard shall immediately implement the emergency plan or contact the Incident Commander using EMERGENCY TRAFFIC to advise of the situation. Included in the Emergency Traffic notification:

- Type/Nature of the hazardous condition (downed electrical wires, imminent building collapse, etc.)
- Specific location
- Resource needs
- Any immediate exposure needs or issues

The Incident Commander shall request the appropriate resources or agency to respond to the incident to evaluate and mitigate the life hazard (i.e., Utility Company, Structural Engineer, etc.) and assign a lookout or Assistant Safety Officer until the Life Hazard is mitigated.

Personnel Emergencies

In an incident, where a threat to life or serious injury is imminent or involved, any unit involved with the incident will/can implement emergency communications procedures. The purpose of these procedures is to enable personnel to expedite the handling of the emergency. The following procedures will apply:

- The emergency will be denoted by transmitting "EMERGENCY TRAFFIC" followed by a brief announcement to the effect that a serious incident is in progress or imminent and only essential radio traffic will be transmitted.
- When the emergency announcement has been transmitted, all units will refrain from using the radio except for transmitting information directly related to the emergency. Units not directly involved in the emergency will locate the nearest safe zone and standby to assist as necessary.
- The Incident Commander (or designee) will assess the situation, determine the assistance required at the incident, and initiate requests through dispatch or by cell phone as required by the situation. Directions to the incident location will be communicated clearly and concisely to the dispatch center.
- When the emergency is concluded the Incident Commander (or designee) will transmit an "All Clear" over the tactical channel in use and notify Dispatch. Dispatch will then transmit an "All Clear" over all Field Unit Repeaters.

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