Chapter 6: Developing the Incident Action Plan

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the student will learn the process for developing and implementing the incident action plan (IAP) for rope rescue incidents. After studying this material, the student should have a working knowledge of the IAP, including; the five phases of the planning process, command functions, communications, and demobilization.

Objectives and Resources

**Knowledge Objectives**

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

 Review the purpose of an incident action plan (IAP) and the role of size-up in generating the IAP. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.1, pp. 84–89)

 Describe how to utilize an incident objectives form when generating an IAP. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.1, pp. 85–89)

 Differentiate among objectives, strategy, and tactics.

 Identify the topics to be covered in IAP briefing.

 Explain how the IAP is coordinated with an incident command structure.

 Describe the process of personnel accountability reporting. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.24, p. 90)

 Identify rope rescue communications considerations.

 Identify the tasks that must be completed during demobilization. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.24, pp. 92–93)

 Identify the considerations for terminating command. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.24, p. 93)

 Identify the steps necessary to return all resources to a ready state. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.24, p. 93)

 Explain the documentation considerations associated with the termination of an incident. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.24, p. 94)

 Review the purpose of a postincident analysis. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.24, p. 94)

**Skill Objectives**

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

 Terminate a rope rescue operation. (NFPA 1006: 5.2.24, pp. 92–94)

Support Materials

 Dry-erase board and markers or chalkboard and chalk

 LCD projector, slide projector, overhead projector, and projection screen

 PowerPoint presentation or slides

 **Navigate for Students**

 **Advantage**

 Each printed textbook comes with an access code that unlocks several valuable teaching and learning assets including:

 **Navigate eBook**.

 Online and offline accessibility ensures that the eBook is always available. Offline interactions are captured, cached, and uploaded the next time they are connected to the Internet.

 **Navigate for Instructors**

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Reading and Preparation

Review all instructional materials, including *Rope Rescue,* Fifth Edition, Chapter 6 and all related presentation support materials.

Chapter Presentation Overview

Pre-lecture

I. You Are the Rescuer

Small-Group Activity/Discussion

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to concepts surrounding the understanding and management of rope rescue incidents.

Instructor Directions

1. Direct students to read the “You Are the Rescuer” scenario found at the beginning of Chapter 6 (p. 84).

2. You may assign students to a partner or a group. Direct them to review the discussion questions at the end of the scenario and prepare a response to each question. Facilitate a class dialogue centered on the discussion questions.

3. You may also assign this as an activity and ask students to turn in their comments on a separate sheet of paper.

Lecture

I. Introduction

A. Rescue teams can enhance their efficiency and safety by following established procedures.

1. Team members know in advance the actions expected of them and can anticipate a team leader’s instructions.

a. Better prepared mentally and physically to respond

b. Increases efficiency and decreases the likelihood of an incorrect decision

c. Modifications relevant to their own application

2. Rescue groups should make a conscious determination as to whether or not their procedures should adhere to appropriate national standards.

3. Rescue is not a one-size-fits-all proposition.

a. Standards often provide useful big-picture guidelines.

b. No one understands local needs better than the responders who work there.

c. A concerted effort should be made by knowledgeable, experienced, local personnel to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) that are relevant and realistic to their response area.

II. **Incident Action Plan (IAP)**

**A. Incident action plan**

1. Is a specific strategy for moving toward resolution of the incident

2. Based on SOPs and the size-up of the incident

3. Incident commander oversees development

4. Living document

a. Verbal

i. For short term, less complex incidents

b. Written

i. For longer more complex incidents

ii. Planning may involve other sections of the incident command structure.

5. Establishes the overall strategic decisions and assigned tactical activities for the incident

1. Unites the efforts of command and rescuers
2. Clearly defines how resources fit into the operation
3. Provides an objective touchstone for command decisions
4. Clearly identifies tasks and assignments
5. Establishes a framework for evaluating progression/success
6. Helps to maintain a big picture perspective
7. Lends to consistent and informed communications

6. Ongoing

7. Identifies specific objectives, priorities, and safety considerations for the present and at least one subsequent operational period

a. Federal Emergency Management Agency’s [FEMA’s] ICS 202 form

8. Encompass all operational periods

9. Can be broken down into different segments

a. Individual operational periods

i. No set requirement

ii. Commonly range from 6 to 10 hours

iii. Provisions for rest, recovery, and rehabilitation of rescuers is one of the prime considerations in establishing length of operational periods.

b. Different areas of command

**B. Incident objectives form**

1. Front page of the IAP

2. Separator between operational periods

3. Anticipated duration is for a given operational period.

**C. Planning P**

1. Mnemonic developed by FEMA

2. May be used in generating an IAP

3. Emphasize the critical importance of adequate planning in incident management

4. Differentiates between initial and ongoing planning

5. Provides a framework for methodically revisiting key areas for consideration

**D. Five phases of the planning process**

1. Phase 1: Understanding the situation

a. Only applies to the initial phases of an operation

b. May be performed by awareness-level rescuers

i. Forms the vertical leg of the Planning P

c. Planning P becomes what FEMA refers to as an Operation O.

i. Composed of the ongoing development and updating of incident objectives

ii. Establishing tactics to meet the objectives

iii. Effective dissemination of the plan

iv. Execution, evaluation, and revision of the plan

d. Command emphasis

i. Section within the ICS 202 form

ii. Describes expected outcomes or milestones for the operational period

iii. Lists priorities

iv. Key message(s) that underpin the effort for that operational period

v. Safety should be a key component of command emphasis observations.

vi. Includes a sequence of events or targeted goals to achieve for that particular period

2. Phase 2: Establishing incident objectives

a. Crafting incident objectives in the IAP

i. General goals or statements of what must be accomplished

ii. Specific tactics for achieving the stated goals in Phase 3

iii. May be assigned to one or more operational periods

iv. Listed in order of priority

v. Clearly defined

vi. Include all objectives as well as current ones

vii. Helps rescuers to maintain a big-picture perspective

b. Incident objectives in the IAP should follow the S-M-A-R-T acronym model

i. Specific

ii. Measurable

iii. Action-oriented

iv. Realistic

v. Time-oriented

3. Phase 3: Developing the plan

a. Operational tactics

i. Strategic plans are made and tactics formed to achieve the goal of rescuing the injured or stranded subjects.

ii. Divided into specific tasks

iii. Tasks are assigned to a sub-group.

iv. Operations officer oversees the tasks of all sub-groups.

v. Ongoing and constantly changing process

vi. Must be updated as progress is made

b. Strategy

i. Identifies an approach to achieving the objective

ii. Form the framework for developing tactics

iii. Should be constantly forming and re-forming strategic plans

iv. Includes back-up plans

v. Affected by available resources, incident parameters (including urgency and hazards), and likelihood of success

vi. Collaborative effort

vii. Plan must be achievable, appropriate, and a wise use of resources.

c. Tactics

i. State the steps to achieve the strategy

ii. Involve implementing the strategy

iii. May be broken down into specific tasks, assigned to a subgroup

iv. Subgroups are managed by the operations officer.

4. Phase 4: Preparing and disseminating the plan

a. Incident briefing

i. Incident objectives

ii. Incident communications plan

iii. Command staff information

iv. Incident map

v. Medical plan

vi. Safety message

vii. Other information, as needed

b. Operations briefing

i. Held at the beginning of each operational period

ii. Ensures that all stakeholders are kept apprised of relevant operational information

iii. In a larger or more complex operations, briefings may be limited to those in leadership positions.

iv. Where possible and especially on smaller incidents, it is generally advisable to include all available rescuers.

5. Phase 5: Executing, evaluating, and revising the plan

a. Communication is key to success.

i. Field reports

ii. Supervisory visits

iii. Ongoing dialogue

iv. Information relevant to the incident

a. Maintaining an Organized Rescue (National Park Service Technical Rescue Manual)

i. Initiate a quick size-up of the incident

ii. Organize an immediate initial response to reach and stabilize the victim

iii. Use ICS and identify positions

iv. Establish an accessible staging area

v. Limit communications with the rescuer or rescuers in technical terrain to the edge manager or the operations chief

vi. Stay ahead of the logistics curve, plan and act now.

vii. Keep rescue systems simple and safe.

II. Implementing the IAP

**A. Span of control**

1. Balance between undertasking and overtasking leaders

2. Optimum span of control

a. A ratio of one supervisor to five subordinate personnel

b. Never more than seven

c. Responders should be divided into smaller, tactical-level management components:

i. Teams

ii. Groups

iii. Divisions

3. Supervisors must maintain a constant awareness of the location and function of all personnel.

a. Personnel accountability reporting (PAR)

i. Tactical worksheets

ii. Command boards

iii. Apparatus riding lists

iv. Also provides for efficient use of rescuers

v. Helps to facilitate crew rotation for rest and rehabilitation during long-duration incidents

**B. Chain of command**

1. Personnel should have one boss, and only one, at any given time.

2. Every rescuer should know to whom they report.

3. Every supervisor must be very clear on who works for them.

4. Provides safety and efficiency

5. Roles and responsibilities

a. Assigned based skills and abilities

b. Needs of the incident, rather than seniority or job titles

c. Focus on the good of the whole, putting their egos aside

6. Transfer of command responsibility

a. Explicit and direct

b. Briefing held to announce the change so that there is no confusion

C. Multijurisdictional/Multiagency Operations

1. Can be a breeding ground for conflicts over who is in charge

2. Can complicate the development of unified response

3. Unified command

a. Each agency or jurisdiction involved has an IC assigned to the operation.

b. The IC jointly decides the incident objectives.

c. Appoints a single operations officer to carry out incident objectives

d. The use of a single operations officer is the key to success.

III. Communications

**A. Communication**

1. Effective communication strategies are extremely important for effective incident management and personnel safety.

2. Conditions in the high-angle environment can often make normal communication very difficult.

3. Voice communication

a. The ability to hear voices is severely restricted.

b. Factors affecting communications

i. Distance

ii. Wind

iii. Weather conditions

iv. Traffic

v. Crowd noise

vi. Other factors

4. Radio communication

a. Conventional radio systems are subject to disruption by physical conditions at the rescue site.

i. Confined spaces

ii. Terrain features

iii. Structures

iv. Electromagnetic interference

b. In some cases, the situation can be improved by switching from repeater channels to simplex communication and/or by deploying a human radio relay at a strategic location.

c. There must be a systematic way to keep track of radio channels.

i. Without a system for channels, confusion arises as individuals try to find a usable channel.

ii. Label the channels on the radio or to keep a frequency sheet with the radio

d. Radios with the same frequency setup

i. Channel numbers can be used to indicate a frequency.

e. Radios with a different frequency setup

i. Radio frequency name must be used.

f. Use of chest harnesses for hands-free operation

i. Keeps the radio protected

ii. Makes radio easily accessible

iii. Requires only a simple, short, hand motion to key the mike

g. Hands-free microphones

i. Throat microphone

ii. Integrated radio headset with noise-cancelling feature

5. Contingency planning

a. Helps to avoid communication failures

b. Provides two forms of communication

6. Nonelectronic communication

a. Whistle blasts

i. Limited in the amount of information that can be communicated

ii. Takes practice to use and be effective

iii. Acronym SUDOT ASTM Standard F1768, *Standard Guide for Using Whistles During Rope Rescue Operations*

S—Stop (one blast)

U—Up (two blasts)

D—Down (three blasts)

O—Off rope (four blasts)

T—Trouble! (continued long blast)

7. The greatest detriment to good communication is not electronic or mechanical failure, but the communicators themselves.

a. Communicate in a clear, concise, and specific manner.

b. Physical direction

i. Directions are often referred to in context of a climber facing the rock.

ii. River right is on the rescuer’s right as they face downstream, and river left is on the left facing downstream.

c. Geographic locations

8. Command vocabulary

a. Reduced to as few words as possible

i. Clear

ii. Concise

iii. Few syllables

b. The same words should be used for specific actions.

i. The only word for cessation of action is “Stop!”

ii. “Whoa,” for example, could easily be mistaken for “slow,” or even worse, for “go.”

iii. Any team member can say “Stop!”, but only the team leader will give the command to proceed.

**B. Communicating for safety**

1. Speak up with critical information.

2. Do not assume someone else will speak up.

3. This level of open communications will not occur naturally.

4. Team members must be actively encouraged through briefings to communicate in critical circumstances.

**C. IC communications**

1. IC needs to be physically in the most advantageous position possible.

2. Must be able to hear all radio communications

3. In a remote situation the operations officer becomes the IC’s eyes and ears.

4. Clear text—a spoken communication style that avoids the use of abbreviated codes—should be used for radio transmissions.

**D. Incident name**

1. Every incident should be assigned a name.

a. Used throughout the incident

b. After the incident

c. Including reference to facilities and resources assigned to the incident

d. Helps with coordination efforts

e. Lends to clear communication

2. Frequently occurring incidents in the same location

a. Require additional information for clarity

i. Date

ii. Incident number

IV. Demobilization

**A. Demobilization plan**

1. Important part of operational readiness

2. Ensures that resources are returned to a ready state

3. Leadership at any level should not leave their assigned post until all resources under their command have left those facilities.

4. The IC should ensure that a demobilization plan is prepared and communicated to all resources and that the plan is implemented.

5. Includes a timeline and process for releasing each resource from the incident

6. Recordkeeping

7. Anticipated timeline in which resources will once again become available

8. Considerations for logistics and resource demobilization

a. Personnel

i. On-site debriefing

ii. Review/appraisal of performance as appropriate

iii. Recording check-in, check-out, and other relevant information

iv. Plans for rest, rehabilitation, and sanitation

v. Anticipated time to return to service

b. Equipment

i. Inventory of rope rescue equipment and other items

ii. Inspection and maintenance as required

iii. Clean and dry ropes and other equipment before storage

iv. Return of equipment to the cache

v. Replacement of lost or damaged equipment

vi. Resupply of expendable items

vii. Documentation of use or disposition

c. Vehicles

i. Refueling

ii. Maintenance functions as required

iii. Cleaning as needed

iv. Restocking

d. Specialty resources

i. Medical supplies

ii. Air-support resources

**B. Manage rescuer risk and site safety**

1. The responsibility of every rescuer

2. Maintain a vigilant watch for hazards and risks

a. Environmental

b. Physical

c. Social

d. Cultural factors

3. Do not become complacent

4. Follow good accountability practices

a. Check-in procedures

b. Check-out procedures

c. Span of control

d. Resource tracking

5. Command should not shut down until every resource (personnel and equipment) is accounted for and released from the incident.

**C. Scene security and custody transfer**

1. Maintained throughout the entirety of the operation

a. Key to operational success

b. Continues until all responders have cleared the scene

c. Limit traffic into and out of the general area surrounding the operation (within about 300 feet [91 m] of the incident, unless otherwise designated by command staff).

d. Monitoring the vicinity for developing hazards

e. Barriers may be useful for helping to keep bystanders at a distance.

f. Where risks cannot be mitigated, areas of high risk (sometimes called a hot zone) can be marked off with marker tape, rope, or other visible means to alert rescuers to the need for special personal protective equipment (PPE) within that area.

g. Assigning a person to monitor barriers can be helpful to prevent unauthorized entry.

2. Incident termination

a. Verify the following:

i. All rescuers are accounted for.

ii. Hazards created by the incident are not lingering.

iii. Custody of the subject has been transferred to a responsible person.

b. Follow local protocols.

**D. Recordkeeping and documentation**

1. Maintained in a secure location in accordance with protocols established by the AHJ

2. Information

a. Accurate and complete

b. Ability to reconstruct the major events and outcomes involved with the incident for legal, analytical, and historical purposes

c. As the old adage goes, “If it isn’t written down, it didn’t happen.”

d. Complete record of what transpired during the effort to resolve the incident from start to finish

i. Including ICS forms from FEMA

ii. Other relevant documents and materials

iii. If more than one agency was involved in the response, the duplication services may be required to ensure that necessary copies are provided to all agencies and incident personnel as necessary.

**E. Data collection and management systems**

1. Determined by AHJ

2. Helps to identify:

a. Trends in incident types

b. Shortfalls in preplans

c. Areas ripe for advancement in training and equipment

d. No right or wrong way of doing this

e. Each agency should determine a method that works for them to provide relevant information.

**F. Conduct postincident analysis**

1. Should include a hot debrief

a. Immediately following the incident

2. Structured debrief, which may occur later

3. The TEMS framework

4. “5-Why” analysis

a. Provides useful information and outcomes

5. The goal of the postincident analysis is not to find fault or lay blame, but is an opportunity for honest reflection on oneself and the team, for the purpose of learning and striving toward excellence.

XV. Summary

** The incident action plan (IAP) begins to form with the first arriving responders; it lays the groundwork for the entire operation.**

** The IAP is developed and updated on an ongoing basis by the incident commander with input from all general staff.**

** FEMA’s Planning P may be used to help generate an IAP. The five phases of an incident under Planning P are:**

**o Phase 1: Understanding the situation**

**o Phase 2: Establishing incident objectives**

**o Phase 3: Developing the plan**

**o Phase 4: Preparing and disseminating the plan**

**o Phase 5: Executing, evaluating, and revising the plan**

** An IAP works best when it is coordinated within the incident command system.**

** In rope rescue, communication strategies include voice, whistle, radio, and hand signals.**

** Terminating an incident effectively includes ensuring that all resources are accounted for and closed out, compiling relevant documentation, and readying for another incident.**

Post-lecture

I. After-Action Review

Individual/Small-Group Activity/Discussion

On Scene

This activity is designed to help the student understanding how to approach a fire investigation. This activity incorporates both critical thinking and the application of basic trench rescue knowledge.

Purpose

To allow students an opportunity to develop responses to critical thinking questions.

Instructor Directions

1. Direct students to read the “On Scene” questions located in the After-Action Review section at the end of Chapter 6 (p. 95).

2. Direct students to read and individually answer the discussion questions. Allow approximately 10 minutes for this part of the activity. Facilitate a class review and discussion of the answers, allowing students to correct responses as needed.

3. You may also assign these as individual activities and ask students to turn in their comments on a separate piece of paper.

Answers

1. How might poorly defined incident objectives contribute to a less-than-desirable outcome in an incident response?

Because objectives drive tactics, poorly defined objectives could result in mis-allocation or inappropriate utilization of critical resources, which could, in turn, result in the strategic goals of the operation not being met.

2. Think back to a recent response and use the S-M-A-R-T acronym to define the following:

(Specific responses will vary by reader/locale, but may include reference to examples such as the following)

 Two objectives that might have been appropriate at the initiation of the incident.

1. Within 5 minutes of arrival at the scene, create a physical barrier between the operational area and the public so that bystanders cannot approach the incident scene or command post.

2. Within 5 minutes of arrival at the scene the acting IC will appoint a strike team leader and members to enter the rescue incident site and make physical contact with the subject for the purpose of preventing further harm and making initial medical assessment.

 Two objectives that might have been appropriate when commencing evacuation.

1. Prior to movement of the litter, a secondary evacuation team will be posted (complete with required personnel and equipment) near the landing zone where the rope rescue will end so that as soon as the litter reaches ground they are ready to transport the litter to the waiting ambulance.

2. During the entire evacuation sequence, a Rapid Intervention team will remain on standby at the point of access to assist in the event that the evacuation team encounters an unforeseen emergency during the evacuation.

 Two objectives that might have been appropriate during incident termination time.

1. Site commander ensure all resources are clear of incident site no later than 1500 hours.

2. Ensure rehab is made available to all resources and that all are checked out of incident by 10AM.

3.Considering your own response agency, list the resources that must be returned to ready-state at the conclusion of an incident, and what this involves.

(Specific responses will vary by reader/locale, but may include reference to examples such as the following)

- Ropes and auxiliary equipment must be cleaned and dried as necessary.

- All rope rescue gear must be inspected and re-assembled/re-packed into kits and bags as applicable.

- All rope, soft goods, and hardware equipment must be re-stowed appropriately on response vehicles after clearing inspection.

- Personal gear must be inspected, maintained, and re-stowed in ready state.

- Vehicles must be restocked, refueled, returned to bays, and placed on trickle charge.

- Medical supplies and equipment used must be cleaned and/or replaced as necessary.

- Rehab supplies must be restocked as needed.

II. Lesson Review

Discussion

Note: Facilitate the review of this lesson’s major topics using the review questions as direct questions or slides. Answers are found throughout this lesson plan.

1. What is an incident action plan (IAP)? (Lecture II)

2. What is the difference between a verbal and written incident action plan (IAP)? (Lecture II)

3. List and describe the five phases of the planning process. (Lecture II)

4. Why are rescue strategies constantly being formed and reformed? (Lecture II)

5. What is the optimum number of personnel one person can manage? What is this called? (Lecture II)

6. What does the acronym S-M-A-R-T stand for? (Lecture II)

7. What are the factors that make communications difficult at a rope rescue incident? (Lecture III)

8. How can communications be improved at rope rescue incidents? (Lecture III)

9. What are good accountability practices to follow for managing rescuer risk and site safety? (Lecture IV)

10. Why is recordkeeping and documentation important at rope rescue incidents? (Lecture IV)

III. Assignments

Lecture

A. Advise students to review materials for a quiz (determine the date/time).

B. Direct students to read the next chapter in *Rope Rescue, Fifth Edition*, as listed in your syllabus (or reading assignment sheet) to prepare for the next class session.