

After-action review

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London bombings of 2005, Oklahoma City Bombings of 1995, and Centennial Olympic Park bombings of 1996 have challenged the effectiveness and efficiency of emergency services in the United Kingdom, and the U. S. London bombings on July 7, 2005 have revealed several serious emergency issues, which were similar to emergency issues in 1995 and 1996 in the United States.

Terrorist acts seriously undermine the stability of any society. The role of emergency services is to provide victims and injured with full information and timely assistance. Critical accidents similar to Oklahoma or Olympic park bombings reveal the major emergency inconsistencies and failures. These failures are later evaluated and addressed in numerous after-action reviews.

Emergency response to London bombings 2005

“ Terrorists attacked London on 7 July 2005, claiming 52 innocent lives and injuring hundreds more. Many more people were affected by their experiences that day and in the days that followed” (Home Office Security, 2006).

Emergency response to bombings was immediate and highly qualified, aimed at providing the injured with the fullest information about the causes and consequences of the critical incident. Information has become the critical element of the emergency response strategy in the post-bombings London.

The first 24 hours after the critical incident have been marked with thousands of calls to police and other emergency rescue services. During one hour, more than 40, 000 London citizens were trying to reach police. To

make emergency response effective, police has immediately expanded the technical opportunities of emergency phone lines.

Telecommunications have acquired additional emergency meaning, and have connected people with professionals who could assist them in crisis. The critical incident in London has revealed the inability of London police to answer and react to all calls. “ The Casualty Bureau was overwhelmed with thousands of calls, made worse by technical problems” (Home Office Security, 2006).

London’s Casualty Bureau has faced serious difficulties in looking for missing people, obtaining information about casualties, and dealing with foreign nationals. To resolve the issues, London authorities have set up a well developed Assistance Centre, to govern, manage, distribute, and obtain the required information.

The problem was in that the majority of victims did not know about the centre and could not address the Assistance center for assistance. Police lacked formal structures which could help maintain the continuous dialogue with survivors. London bombings of 2005 have revealed the need for close cooperation between police and humanitarian organizations.

Cooperation between police and numerous humanitarian agencies is critical to provide survivors with the required material, medical, and related assistance. London emergency and police agencies have done everything possible to guarantee that the critical information reaches survivors by means of several humanitarian agencies.

In the next 24 hours after the bombings occurred, London emergency agencies had to deal with fatalities. “ An initial temporary mortuary was set up to receive fatalities within 24 hours. Over the following 48 hours, full mortuary and autopsy facilities were built in accordance with pre-prepared plans” (Home Office Security, 2006).

London police departments had to coordinate fatalities from the four different bomb locations. The pre-planned autopsy arrangements were effective, but the process of body identification was too long; numerous families and relatives of victims have gone through profound distress due to the lack of objective information about the exact victims and survivors of the critical incident.

The bombings have led to the creation of a new critical incident plan. The plan could be coordinated at the international level. London bombings have led to realization of potential threats and hazards, and unresolved safety issues. London bombings have become a real-life test for the pre-prepared critical incident plans earlier developed by emergency professionals.

Oklahoma City Bombings 1995

Oklahoma City Bombings were as unexpected as critical incidents in London later in 2005. In distinction from London, Oklahoma did not place communications to the forefront of the emergency rescue operations. Oklahoma City emergency strategy was headed by first-in fire companies, medical, and law enforcement personnel, civilians and voluntary organizations. A “ controlled perimeter was created around the dangerous site” (The Oklahoma Department of Civil Emergency Management, 1995).

Casualty Bureau has accepted and processed critical amount of information immediately after London bombings occurred. Casualty Bureau dealt with survivors. In Oklahoma, an Incident Command System was established. Incident Command System (ICS) was aimed at resolving intensive search and rescue issues, but did not deal with survivors directly.

ICS served a coordination center between several emergency agencies, and facilitated the cooperation and communication between local voluntary agencies. ICS dealt with the re-distribution of resources and equipment. Oklahoma City Fire Department handled fire risks. Oklahoma City police department handled security aspects under the command of Oklahoma County Sheriff.

London has displayed inability to extensively use the pre-prepared emergency plans. In distinction, Oklahoma City authorities have created a precedent of effective action and cooperation between numerous emergency agencies without any specific pre-prepared plan.

Following the incident, Oklahoma City authorities have created several after-action plans to assist the survivors and to deal with victims' families. "Oklahoma City Bombing Disaster Resource Coordination Committee was made up of government and voluntary agencies and donated funds administrators to service the unmet needs of victims which were not covered" (Suprun, 1995).

From emergency management perspective, Oklahoma City bombings have revealed several serious issues. First, the response plan required

modification to include the description of Law Enforcement Agencies' responsibilities and functions.

Second, local response plans had to be based on the Federal and Regional response plans, with minor changes according to specific local situation. Third, federal, state, and local emergency agencies required extensive cooperative training. Training would help numerous emergency agencies coordinate their efforts during critical incidents.