

Interpersonal communications in the emergency service



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Missing the Vital Link: How Communication Problems affect Emergency

Personnel Since Septet. 11, 2001 communication has worsened with dispatch and emergency personnel, which has resulted to lack of information, situation updates, and incident command. Communication issues will always be around, but communication problems in emergency situations could be costly. With the lack of the right information something could possibly go wrong. It starts with the caller the information they give can be misleading.

What could go wrong with the lack of information that the dispatchers receive from the callers? Without a situation update on an emergency situation what will happen? How can what was already a small scale emergency go on too catastrophe due to lack of communication? The first vital link in information starts the second the emergency call comes in.

Usually, the information from someone who is there is called into a dispatch center. The dispatchers are the ones who receive all the information and have to decipher what is relevant versus what is irrelevant.

The information is not always accurate, or truthful and sometimes lack important information. Dispatchers need to get the right information from callers, so they can send out the right people to assist with the emergency.

Simple information like, names, addresses and an accurate description of what is going on, are all important information that is sometimes lacking and could but critical for everyone involved (“ Emergency Communications”).

Situation updates is another communication problem with communications in the emergency services.

Situation updates are updates from the dispatcher to the responders and helps responders understand what's currently going on between the time they are dispatched and the time they arrive on the scene. Situation updates and information on an emergency scene are usually given through two way radio systems. This radio system allows responders from multiple agencies to communicate. This is the second lifeline and vital link throughout any scene. Without the situation updates, responders can very easily walk into what is usually a routine call and be killed by an active shooter or an irate subject.

Incident Command is another communication issue in emergency situations. Incident command starts the minute a responder arrives on scene and lasts throughout the entire incident. It is a system that is designed to expand and contract as the scene progresses. Accountability is one of the vital components of incident command and involves tracking of personnel on scene (AIMS). Accountability is a type of communication that is defined by the incident commander and their team. Officers and agencies must know where the responders are at all times. Officers are normally your incident commanders, they are the ones that ensure scene safety and communications on the scene. They make account of everyone on the fire scene" (Smith, James)". Regardless of task or position, every responder must be accounted for. Without accountability, it becomes difficult to track personnel on scene and leads to free lancing. Responders are taught from the start of their career that free lancing will get them killed. In any emergency situation, communication is needed. Some situations can go wrong, and for example a fire truck was dispatched to the wrong address.

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The Begs Fire Department was dispatched out for a residential structure fire. Because of false information given to fire fighters from dispatch, fire fighters did not arrive on scene until 45 minutes after the tones dropped. This is a good example of a real life emergency situation that went wrong.

Miscommunication between the caller and the dispatcher lead to the delay of the fire department. In emergency situations time is crucial, you never have enough time in the line of an emergency. In emergency situations miscommunication is very dangerous, it's someone's life at risk.

Not only the people involved but the ones the dispatchers send for the emergency situations. Little things like a location and the name of a person really make a difference in a situation like that (Fire Truck Dispatched to Wrong Location for House Fire). Overall the communication has worsened over the years. Just like on September 11th, 2001. People were calling nonstop about situations going on in the towers. Since that day communication has changed but you will always have communication errors and miscommunication will be around forever.

These issues need to be minimized as much as possible in emergency situations. Communication in the emergency service is critical, it helps responders understand what is going on and what resources will be needed for the emergency. " With technology being the source for communication, you do have difficulties. Systems will go down and when that happens people can't contact anyone to know if a small situation has turned for the worst. Today's society has rosined because of technology miscommunication happens".