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Conducting Your Own Collaborative Training Events

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Out of the Ashes – Conducting Your Own Regional Collaborative Training Events

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

Abstract

This white paper identifies the personal and organizational attributes, methods, and procedures necessary for anyone and any organization with the will and supporting circumstances to propose, plan, and conduct a collaborative training event.

American cities, towns, and villages routinely address a variety of challenges on their own and in collaboration with others. Foremost among the challenges these communities face is the ability to respond to and recover from disaster. While communities may prepare for disaster, it is difficult to train for response and recovery in an efficient or effective manner because most of the variables are beyond their control. Communities seldom have the opportunity to choose the disaster they will face, the extent and type of damages incurred, and whom they will work with during the response and recovery!

Regional and Community Collaborative Training Events provide communities the opportunity to address and improve the things they can control: interpersonal and interagency relationships, organizational and leadership knowledge and skills, and the use of situational awareness tools to maintain a common operating picture. Collaborative training events provide communities a low-cost opportunity to develop interpersonal and interagency relationships, meet their training objectives, and improve their incident command and management skills.

Communities remain the target of domestic and international terrorists. Plans discovered in the handbag of the FBI's "most wanted" woman point to a continued effort to plan and carry out attacks against Americans. While terror is a threat, natural disaster routinely wreaks havoc, injuring or killing hundreds each year while destroying billions in property and infrastructure. The reality and high probability of natural disasters, possibility of terrorist attacks, and other mass casualty incidents should motivate competing organizations to set aside differences and work together to build the social fabric necessary to efficiently respond to unimagined scenes of destruction.

Purpose

This white paper identifies the personal and organizational attributes, methods, and procedures necessary for anyone and any organization with the will and supporting circumstances to propose, plan, and conduct a collaborative training event.

Collaborative training events are low-cost training and education opportunities organized from the bottom up by the agencies, organizations, and vendors willing to participate. The bottom up organization and focus helps community and regional organizations leverage their training objectives, training budgets, personnel, equipment, and relationships to improve their ability to respond and recover from a disaster.

The planning process and training event provide a no-fault venue to practice interoperable communications (voice and data), become familiar with supporting agency personnel and procedures, and build relationships with local, regional, and national organizations and agencies. In addition to traditional participants, consider inviting nontraditional participants. These could include, but are not limited to, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), vendors, Department of State, and Department of Defense participants. The relationships and education gained improves integration of valuable capabilities and services during disaster response and recovery.

Every community or region with a desire to practice interoperable communications, improve interpersonal and interagency relationships, and develop effective and flexible response and recovery strategies should be able to plan and carry out their own collaborative training event. *Out of the Ashes – Conducting Your Own Regional Collaborative Training Events* provides the basic information, attributes, methods, and procedures necessary for any community to plan for and conduct their own collaborative training event.

Introduction

American cities, towns, and villages routinely address a variety of challenges on their own and in collaboration with others. Foremost among the challenges these communities face is the ability to respond to and recover from disaster. While communities may prepare for disaster, it is difficult to train for response and recovery in an efficient or effective manner because most of the variables are beyond their control. Communities seldom have the opportunity to choose the disaster they will face, the extent and type of damages incurred, and whom they will work with during the response and recovery!

Problem Description

Every American community faces potential disaster. Whether earthquakes, floods, wildfires, pandemic influenza, hurricanes, severe weather, chemical spills, or terrorist attack; every community must prepare to respond with all of the local, regional, state, and national resources available to them. While “relationships” between these various agencies and organizations exist on paper, they are seldom provided the opportunity to grow into strong personal relationships capable of building and maintaining a resilient social fabric.

Communities may participate in exercises, but these are often very expensive and tied to disbursement of money critical to resource acquisition. The importance of passing the exercise at all costs (avoiding the reality or perception of failure) leads to tightly scripted and controlled training that fails to identify or fix critical gaps or develop effective interagency working relationships. First responders may not have time to develop and renew strong interpersonal and interagency relationships that allow disaster response leaders and operators to perform quick resource integration during a crisis.

Large-scale disasters are too big for one agency to handle alone. Since “. . .85 percent of our nation’s critical infrastructure is controlled not by government but by the private sector¹ . . .” private companies with critical infrastructure in the region should be invited to participate in collaborative training events.

Though the relationships established during a collaborative training event are invaluable, they are not necessarily permanent since people retire, are promoted, or move to different agencies. For example, the fire chief at the 2009 collaborative training event may not be there the following year. Communities need an affordable training alternative that enables them to effectively prepare their first responders and citizens to perform response and recovery operations with a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional agencies and organizations. Communities also need an affordable tool to develop strong and effective interpersonal relationships between first responders of all levels. Good interpersonal and interagency relationships will help create organizational climates that facilitate interoperable communication improvements and interagency collaboration and response. Collaborative training events are affordable and prepare responders and citizens to work with each other.

White Paper Development

After planning for, conducting, and documenting the results of three Golden Phoenix collaborative training events, it was apparent that this type of training was effective, economical, and beneficial to communities across the country. Since the key leadership remained consistent for all three events, we interviewed planners, coordinators, and facilitators for this year’s event. To obtain and distill the necessary information, the authors of this white paper asked, “What is necessary for any community to create and conduct their own low-cost collaborative training event?” It was clear the facilitators and planners had some unique **personal attributes** critical to getting everything done. Informal discussions provided clear indicators of the attributes essential to identifying future facilitators and leaders. The facilitators and planners were quick to point out that they could not have succeeded without the support of their respective organizations and the people that work with them. That led to the understanding that certain **organizational attributes** were essential to success. Questions were drafted to identify attributes, methods, and procedures. The authors conducted several interviews averaging an hour in length. The resulting answers were examined to identify common threads, personal and organizational attributes, methods, and procedures. The results led to the identification of roles that will help you develop your own collaborative training event. The roles were broken into required and optional, with the attributes for each listed to help identify personnel qualified to perform the role.

Reasons for Planning and Participating

Collaborative training events provide a no fault, low-cost opportunity to develop relationships with various organizations, agencies, NGOs and businesses involved in disaster response and recovery. Relationships foster trust and provide an improved awareness and understanding of each other’s missions, responsibilities, and capabilities. As the planning process and event take place, learning is reinforced and relationships grow. The planning process and event provide an opportunity for personnel to develop the bonds and camaraderie essential for sustaining collaboration during long-term response and recovery efforts.

Long-term results include complimentary and synergistic partnerships between regional, state, and federal entities, NGOs, and industry. The partnerships identify ways to improve disaster response and recovery, without the costly trial and error associated with most disaster responses.

¹ 9/11 Commission Report, the 9/11 Commission, Government Printing Office, August 2004.

Planning and Conducting a Collaborative Training Event

Funding

Community and regional priorities and methodologies should drive budget creation for collaborative training events.

Training event costs should come from agency operations or training budgets – each agency pays their own way. Golden Phoenix training costs came from the operations and training budgets of participating agencies and organizations. The following are proposed budget line items:

Facilitator/Coordinator – A neutral individual with the attributes identified in Table 1. This could be a collateral job for small collaborative training events, or a dedicated assignment for larger ones.

Observers/Analysts – Paid or volunteer personnel during the Initial Planning Conference (IPC), Midterm Planning Conference (MPC), and Final Planning Conference (FPC). Many of these positions could be volunteer or internship positions from local universities, colleges, and academies. Table 1 and Table 2 identify the attributes for these positions.

Additional funding considerations:

Regional governing authorities could sponsor or conduct collaborative training events, by providing funding to support public safety agency training.

When regional agencies participate in major exercises, a portion of the exercise funds are usually mandated for conferences and training. Spend some of that money on a collaborative training event. The collaborative training event could improve regional capabilities and preparedness consistent with the exercise goals and objectives. Using a collaborative training event provides an opportunity to address gaps or issues prior to the exercises – when done as part of exercise preparation.

Regional Focus

Collaborative training events enable effective training in your region. Ensure the team maintains a regional focus. To develop a strong and motivating regional focus, consider doing some or all of the following items:

- Provide training that is specific to realistic regional threats – identify your major regional threat(s).
- Define the scenario – regional participants play to that scenario.
- Emphasize regional focus to expose all participating entities to regional strengths and weaknesses – laying the groundwork for future cooperation and collaboration.

Evaluation

Success Criteria

Collaborative training events, and the procedures involved in making them a success, contribute directly to successful incident response and recovery. Initial evaluation criteria consist of tracking regional interest. Organizations invited to participate, the number that participated in each of the planning

conferences, and finally, the number that participated in the actual event. Did the numbers increase or decrease? Are more organizations interested in the next one? A successful event would see growth in interest. Participant skill levels are another metric for measuring success.

Participating organizations answer post-event questions in a positive manner or with items that can be effectively examined and addressed, the collaborative training event was a success. For example, here are some post-event questions that can be distributed via surveys or answered at a hotwash:

- How effective was the collaborative training event in helping your agency, organization, or company achieve your training objectives?
- How did the training event improve your communications interoperability with other organizations?
- How did the training event improve your ability to work with other organizations?
- What gaps, issues, or failures did participating entities identify that need to be fixed?

Another measure of success would be training event debriefs asking participants what they learned, whether or not they achieved their training objectives, and that encourages them to identify successes or failures they observed or were part of. Remember, this is not for attribution, so individual people or agencies should not be criticized by name. Identify the local and regional issues, and ways to fix them.

Evaluation Tools and Techniques

Use direct observation of the collaborative training event, submission of participant ICS214 (Unit Activity Log), participating entity after action report submissions, notes taken during the collaborative training event hotwash, and observer team debriefs to develop a collaborative training event after action report. The report identifies community or regional best practices and lessons learned. When lessons learned are identified, there should be recommendations included that provide a way to address the issue.

Use the training event to evaluate various systems or technologies for regional use. Share information developed during this process with regional clients and the vendor that demonstrated or operated the specific system.

While some organizations may want to evaluate their play, evaluation in the strict sense used during exercises should be avoided during training events. The objective is to provide an arena and scenario that allow participating agencies to achieve training objectives, even if mistakes are made during the training. Many of the best lessons learned are a result of mistakes. Instead of pointing fingers and laying blame, participants have the opportunity to work together to identify and fix the real problems.

Observers with a good understanding of the training objectives observe participants and record what happens. Placed at various incident sites, they will be able to identify and capture a set of criteria defined by the collaborative training event sponsors and planners. Ideally, the observer and documentation team would be a neutral third party.

Every Participating Entity Benefits From the Evaluation

Collaborative training events are a no-fault training environment, not hurting anyone, but allowing them to look back and see if they met their training objectives.

Collaborative training event participants will see the final after action report. They can use the best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations to:

- Improve all aspects of communications interoperability,
- Fix issues while preparing for a larger field exercise,

- Influence local, regional, and state policy about issues of importance to local and regional first responders, and
- Use the contacts and relationships created during the training event to get things done!

Roles and Personal Attributes

Collaborative training events require a small team of personnel from participating organizations to facilitate participation, lead planning efforts, and observe, analyze, and document event results. The team must be open to traditional and non-traditional participants or organizations with new or different ideas. With regional threats and training objectives in mind, the team must be able to make tough decisions quickly as needed. Roles are broken into two categories, required and optional. Role descriptions follow each matrix (Table 1 and Table 2). Attribute descriptions follow the optional role descriptions.

Communities and regions make collaborative training event staffing decisions based on their objectives and the availability of personnel and resources. Identifying the Facilitator/Coordinator is the most critical decision. They must have all of the attributes listed below and be perceived as neutral by the principle participating agencies. It is important to note that many of the roles are similar to roles identified in the Incident Command System. If your region has, or wants to develop, these National Incident Management System Incident Command System (NIMS ICS) roles, use NIMS ICS for the planning process and during the event. Table 1 provides a list of required and optional roles with recommended attributes.

Required Roles

The roles in Table 1 are essential to the successful planning and execution of a collaborative training event. For small events, the roles could be a collateral assignment performed by a willing and qualified member of a participating agency. As event size grows, participating agencies may want to assign an individual to perform the role as their only job during the planning process and training event (10 to 12 months), or hire qualified individuals to perform various roles.

Table 1. Required Roles and Associated Attributes

Roles	Right Motivation	Persuasive Speaker	Organized	Not Afraid to Take a Political Hit	Confident	Resilient	Driven, but not Obsessive	Builds and Maintains Relationships	An Expert, but not Narrowly Focused	Competent, not Condescending	Shares Experiences with Planners and Participants	Open/Easy to Talk To, Personable
Facilitator/Coordinator	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facilitator Assistant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communications Planner	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Observer Coordinator			X						X		X	X
Planning Team Members	X		X		X			X	X	X	X	X

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Data/Info Capture Team Members			X		X			X	X			X

Facilitator/Coordinator

Leads and facilitates planning conferences, collaborative training event, and activities necessary to achieve desired goals and objectives. Reaches out to agencies, organizations, industry partners, and nongovernmental organizations. Guides planning process and scenario development. Resolves issues between organizations. Leads post-event hotwash and debrief activities.

Facilitator Assistant

A peer that works closely with the facilitator. Attends meetings when there are schedule conflicts, steps in for the facilitator when needed due to other obligations, and serves as a lead for distinct or remote incident locations. Your training event may have additional venues requiring the same planning, coordination, and facilitation as that done by the Facilitator/Coordinator.

Planning Team Member

Planning Team members are key members of participating agencies, organizations, and vendors that work with the various committees to develop plans and scenarios that allow achievement of training objectives.

Communications Planner

Coordinates and plans training event and support communications (voice and data). The scope depends on the region, but may include voice, WLAN, SATCOM, and other communication mediums. The planner should address frequency or channel use and management, equipment and user manuals, mutual aid channels, and interoperable communication procedures. Ideally, the regional communications planner is a qualified Communications Unit Leader (COML) familiar with the region’s major communication systems. Include industry partners (hospitals, logistics, critical infrastructure operations, and so on).

Observer Coordinator

Manages observers and data/information capture team members, leads data and information capture during the collaborative training event (if possible, during the planning phases too), and analyzes and reports results. Responsibilities may include writing the after action report.

Data/Information Capture Team Members

At least one member of this team handles Facilitator/Coordinator (and when needed, Assistant Facilitator) scheduling, attends meetings and conferences to take minutes/notes, and receives copies of all Facilitator/Coordinator (and when needed, Assistant Facilitator) emails (to support scheduling and for archival purposes). Archives all collaborative training event correspondence. Other data or information capture team members could be short-term observers. Ensure observers are qualified or receive appropriate training.

Optional Roles

Choosing optional roles in Table 2 depends on the size, scope, and resources available to support a collaborative training event in your community or region. For small events, the roles could be a collateral assignment. As event size grows, participating agencies may assign someone to perform a role full-time or hire a qualified individual to perform the role. Do not overlook possibility of using a qualified volunteer that can commit to doing the assigned tasks.

Table 2. Optional Roles and Associated Attributes

Roles	Right Motivation	Persuasive Speaker	Organized	Not Afraid to Take a Political Hit	Confident	Resilient	Driven, but not Obsessive	Builds and Maintains Relationships	An Expert, but not Narrowly Focused	Competent, not Condescending	Shares Experiences with Planners and Participants	Open/Easy to Talk To, Personable
Funds Manager	X		X		X			X	X			X
Logistics Coordinator	X		X		X			X	X	X		X
Event PIO	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X
SMEs as needed	X		X		X				X			X

Funds Manager

Secures, manages, tracks, and distributes shared funds. May be necessary when event and planning process uses contractors or consultants to fill the required or optional roles.

Logistics Coordinator

Secures shared resources deemed essential to the successful completion of the training event or planning process.

Event Public Information Officer (PIO)

Works with facilitator and staff to identify, develop, and disseminate training event related press releases, coordinates media observation or participation. Participates in planning sessions to identify training and

education opportunities for participating agency PIOs. Collaborative training involvement with media should be defined based on community needs and experience.

Personal Attribute Descriptions

These are the attributes necessary for people to fill the various roles identified in this white paper.

Right Motivation – Individual recognizes need for collaborative training, and makes that their primary motive for participating. Promotion and recognition are not what motivates them.

Persuasive Speaker – Individual can explain and convince listeners. Listeners feel like they matter and want to be part of what is being proposed. Listeners are motivated to tell others about the event.

Organized – Capable of maintaining a busy and changing schedule. Working alone and with others, meets objectives and deadlines.

Not Afraid to Take a Political Hit – Able to speak frankly with people. Realizes toes may be stepped on, but is not afraid to act. Willing to apologize for mistakes and the mistakes of others.

Confident – Makes good decisions quickly. Does not waffle. Fixes mistakes and moves on.

Resilient – Able to take political hits and endure warranted and unwarranted criticism. Working with people from diverse organizations can lead to “political” mistakes and criticism. Must be able to listen, endure, and shake off gaffes and attacks of others.

Driven, but not Obsessive – Gets things done, but does not focus so tightly that they miss other things.

Competent, not Condescending – Subject matter expert and knowledgeable, but does not talk down to others or spend time pushing their own agenda, knowledge, or expertise.

Builds and Maintains Relationships – Interested in the ideas and issues of others. Works to find ways that allow participation. Realizes one event is not the goal; long-term relationships, long-term capabilities improvement, and readiness for future incidents and events are the goal.

An Expert, but not Narrowly Focused – Great in their field of expertise, but easily understands the big picture and other components of the big picture.

Shares Experiences with Planners and Participants – Training and education happen when in the presence of this individual. Participants learn, whether participating for one day or the entire process.

Personable – People can approach with new ideas, suggestions, or disagreements. Easy to work with, even when you have disagreements.

Organizational Attributes

These are attributes essential in organizations supporting a collaborative training event or providing key personnel to assist in the planning and execution of the event. The Facilitator/Coordinator and planning team need the trust, freedom, and support of their superiors and organization.

Vision – Recognize the importance of using collaborative training to build interpersonal and interagency relationships and improve organizational ability and flexibility during disaster response and recovery.

Open Minded – Develop partnerships with traditional and non-traditional entities (agencies, organizations, industry, and so on). Identify and overcome traditional barriers, enabling a quicker, more effective response.

Committed – Will serve the public in the best way possible, see the event through, and provide a well qualified (has most of the personal attributes identified above) planning team and staff members.

Realistic expectations – Understand what they are signing up for and know they can accomplish the task. Industry participants must be willing to forgo marketing (realistic expectations, this is not a trade show).

Methods and Procedures

Identify people and organizations to perform required and optional roles, apply methods, and develop and perform procedures. Tailor these methods and procedures to serve your community or region. Methods consist of people and organizations performing tasks to achieve a desired outcome. Procedures are a series of actions or steps used to accomplish defined tasks.

Methods

High-level descriptions of what the various role players and organizations must do to plan for, implement, and execute collaborative training events. Many regional organizations and agencies have established training or planning expertise and procedures.

Instigation and Start Up

The person with the desire, passion, or brilliant idea to do a collaborative training event may be seeking answers and stumble on this white paper, or be directed to plan and coordinate a collaborative training event by their boss. They identify and bring the first few collaborators together in a meeting or meetings before the IPC. If the instigator has the necessary attributes, assign them to a required role or make them a member of the planning or communications committee. All involved will benefit from their passion.

Outreach

Principals identify the broad scope of the collaborative training event and begin personally inviting counterparts and people from their personal networks to play. If the principals have identified and confirmed an interest in participating with industry partners, they should reach out to personal contacts and local, regional, state, and national industry or business associations.

Organization Structure

Use a flat or horizontal organizational structure made up of the key participating agency leaders to provide leadership. This structure provides the flexibility to lead all participants without hindering or limiting the participation and contribution of participants, committees, and so on. The flat structure also provides the capability to assign qualified and informed individuals to experiments or venues that could overwhelm the facilitator's span of control.

User and Agency Centered Design

Ideally, collaborative training events develop from the bottom up. As a result, the event should meet participating agency training objectives during scenario development and planning. Keep budgets, capabilities, and community or regional threat preparedness needs in mind. Depending on regional collaborative training objectives, determine the amount of control required to achieve those objectives – some scenarios and objectives benefit from loosely coupled training with a minimal amount of control. Other scenarios and objectives benefit from tight control, simulated or notional activity, and injects.

Loosely Coupled Training – Training modules stand alone and do not depend on successful completion of a scripted task or module. Successful completion requires a few well-defined objectives with some plans or guidelines to help participants move through the training module.

Depending on module guidance, there could be a great deal of freedom, providing participants opportunity to develop unique or new solutions. It could also be very focused, with little room for improvisation. Though loosely coupled, the modules bring together participating organizations and personnel.

To meet training objectives, planners may need to identify and provide simulated activity or injects, even though the event is loosely coupled. Failure to identify or meet these needs may prevent some participants from meeting their training objectives.

Tightly Coupled Training – Training modules depend on successful completion of scripted tasks or the output of other training modules before initiation or completion. Tight control requires notional and simulated injects for a controller to insert when the triggering information is missed or not available.

Observation, Analysis, and Documentation

Decide early (before the IPC) what you want to document for your collaborative training event participants and sponsors. This decision drives the number, timing, and type of observers you identify to document the best practices and lessons learned for your region. Ensure observers are available for all activities you want to document and improve.

Procedures

Procedures are repeatable actions that should yield consistent results. Many regions have procedures in place. If documented, use them and update them with the lessons learned. If regional responders say, “Our procedures are in our heads, we know what they are...,” use the initial collaborative training event to capture and document the procedures. Responders unfamiliar with regional procedures will be able to integrate more effectively into regional response and recovery efforts.

Use the following high-level procedures, modifying as necessary to support your collaborative training event needs.

Startup Procedures

Briefly consider how your community or region would benefit from holding a collaborative training event.

- What are the personal relationships with other first response organizations and industry partners you would use to perform critical tasks or obtain critical resources?
- What are the recurring community or regional problems that negatively affect response and recovery?

- Finally, identify the top two or three realistic potential disasters that require
 - activation of mutual aid agreements,
 - help from regional, state, or federal authorities, and
 - assistance of nongovernmental organizations and industry partners.

The responses provide a loose framework for creating collaborative training event goals and objectives. Draft a list of local, regional, state, federal, and commercial entities capable of providing people qualified to plan and carry out a collaborative training event. Limit the initial group size to 10 or fewer people representing several important or influential participating agencies. These must be respected individuals capable of encouraging others to participate and able to commit to the long-term training event success.

Prior to announcing the IPC, meet and broadly identify or outline the following:

- a short list of neutral third party agencies capable of providing a Facilitator/Coordinator
- each principal's training objectives for the next two years
- grant or other funding tied to meeting certain training objectives
- grant or other funding tied to implementation or deployment of new systems or equipment
- current community and regional threats (natural or manmade disasters – keep realistic)
- current community and regional first response problems and issues
- current community and regional interoperable communication issues
- identify technologies, systems, and capabilities you want to evaluate during the training event
- recommended leadership for the various committees
- potential venues consistent with the training objectives and scenario
- type of scenario (for example, natural disaster, infectious disease, terrorist attack, and so on)
- planning conferences (IPC, MPC, and FPC) dates and locations
- collaborative training event dates and locations
- support staff requirements, identification, and funding if applicable
- desired number and type of participating agencies and organizations

As your team is formed, invite or encourage others to participate. Identify the Facilitator/Coordinator and administrative support staff early to handle the responses and questions of those you invite. The support staff can begin preparations for the IPC. Depending on community or regional training objectives and needs, identify and invite government and nongovernment agencies to participate in the planning and execution of your training event. To the extent that it meets your objectives, open the door wide for people to participate!

Preparation Procedure

In preparation for the IPC, identify, appoint, and brief the personnel identified to fill the various roles on their responsibilities and duties. Ensure they have the support they need to get the job done. The following are additional items to address while preparing for the planning conferences:

- Identify various committees needed to ensure success. At a minimum, there should be a planning and a communications committee. Assign qualified personnel to lead and fill these committees.
 - The Planning Committee should include a representative from the Communications Committee (preferably the chairperson).
 - The Communications Committee should develop clear and specific interoperable communication (voice and data) plans to allow all participants to improve interoperable communications skills.

- Identify the training event scenario and its broad parameters.
- Develop agendas, presentations, and handouts for the planning conference(s) that reflect regional training objectives, participant training objectives, committee plans, and the overall scope and purpose of the regional collaborative training event.
- Templates for planning conference agendas, briefs, and support materials can be found at https://hseep.dhs.gov/hseep_vols/allDocs.aspx?a=O.
- Modify the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) templates to reflect the size and scope of your collaborative training event.
- Announce the IPC time and location to everyone that has been invited or shown interest.

Reach out to all regional public safety agencies, organizations, and business associations, inviting them to participate in the IPC. Share the identified regional training objectives and needs. Visit and brief industry trade groups, inviting them to participate. Visit local business organizations, letting them know what you will be doing and how they can participate. In short, reach out to any organization, agency, or business that could play a role in disaster response and recovery.

Planning Procedure

The planning conferences are where the small team's vision for the collaborative training event is broadcast to other interested parties. Agenda, brief, and other templates are on the HSEEP website at https://hseep.dhs.gov/hseep_vols/allDocs.aspx?a=O. MPC templates are located at https://hseep.dhs.gov/hseep_vols/allDocs.aspx?a=M, and an FPC agenda template is at https://hseep.dhs.gov/HSEEP_Vols/viewResults.aspx?qsearch='FPC%20Agenda'. Remember to modify these templates to meet your needs. Do not allow the template to drive your training event.

As people arrive at the planning conferences, capture their name and contact information. Since these are low-cost events, consider using business cards as the primary registration medium with a sign-in sheet for those who do not have cards. Position the welcome and registration area between the entrance and the refreshments, gently persuading people to give up their contact information before they begin networking. Obtain a business card scanner and use it to record contact information. The registration table is also an ideal area to provide participants the agenda or other relevant handouts.

Cover the following during the IPC: Welcome and Introductions, Collaborative Training Event Overview, Collaborative Training Event Participants, Collaborative Training Event Design, Identify Training Objectives, Scenario Elements and Venue, Documentation, Evaluation, Support Requirements, Action Items, and Next Steps.

Cover the following during the MPC: Welcome and Introductions, IPC Review, Objectives – Key Decisions and Actions, Collaborative Training Event Design (Collaborative Training Event Scenario and Documentation), Collaborative Training Event Evaluation (Functional Areas, Evaluators, Collaborative Training Event Evaluation Guides), Venue Site and Logistics, Participants, Timelines, Review / Action Items, and Questions.

Cover the following during the FPC: Introductions, Collaborative Training Event Purpose, Scope, and Objectives, Scenario timeline, Participating Agencies, Collaborative Training Event Facilitation, Collaborative Training Event Evaluation, Collaborative Training Event Documents, Collaborative Training Event Logistics, Meeting Dates, and Closing.

The above are suggested agenda items. Modify as needed to support your collaborative training event.

Collaboration and Communication Procedure

Depending on the size of your collaborative training event, your Facilitator/Coordinator and some staff will be overwhelmed by email correspondence. During the recovery phase of incident response, leadership and staff experience similar communication demands. Collaborative training events are an ideal time to practice using low to no-cost internet collaboration tools capable of supporting users from various network and equipment domains. Visit the civmil.org site to see how an online collaboration tool works. The Golden Phoenix 2008 After Action Report may also be available there, containing detail about establishing your own collaboration site or obtaining access to other collaboration sites.

The ideal collaboration tool provides a location to place relevant policies, procedures, and information in a forum accessible to training event participants. Participants are able to join groups that mirror their functions and interests in the actual training event or incident.

Communications personnel interested in communication plans and issues could sign up for and get access to the communications group. If they want or need all content, they can opt to have the content automatically emailed to them. If they do not want to read several email messages every day, they can opt to log onto the collaboration site and sign into the group to review the various communications. If they need the communications plan, a template, or some other piece of information, they can download it to their device.

Collaboration tools provide layered access to relevant information. While extremely valuable, the best collaboration tool cannot take the place of personal communications – a phone call or face-to-face discussion. When issues or conflicts begin to arise, do not hesitate to call or visit the individual.

Conclusion

Background

The Golden Phoenix series of collaborative training events occurred in 2006, 2007, and 2008. The collaborative training events were the result of tasking by a Marine Air Group commander to identify how Marines can effectively serve with and support civilian first responders during disaster response.

MAG-46 had a number of Marines whose primary jobs were law enforcement or fire fighting, resulting in established relationships and a contact list with several Los Angeles and Orange County public safety agencies. Introductions were made, needs were identified, public safety leadership obtained buy-in, and MAG-46 provided personnel to facilitate and participate in the collaborative training event.

During the 2006 collaborative training event, five agencies participated for four hours of training with about 200 people. The training took place in the Los Angeles and Orange County region. In 2007, 60 agencies participated for 30 hours of training involving around 2,000 people. The training still took place in the Los Angeles and Orange County region. In 2008, 150 agencies participated for just over 4 days of training that involved over 750 people in San Diego County. Additional agencies and personnel participated in intelligence and Defense Support to Civilian Authorities (DSCA) training the week before the collaborative training event.

The relationships with the various public safety organizations, military commands, NGOs, and industry have proven invaluable to regional public safety entities in San Diego, Los Angeles, and Orange Counties. Participants identified and developed capabilities and procedures to address a variety of communications interoperability, data interoperability, and system issues discovered during the planning process or training event. Were it not for this training event, these issues would be discovered during

incident response (when lives and property are on the line) or exercise play (when reputations and funding may be on the line).

Results

Regional collaborative training events provide communities the opportunity to improve relationships, skills, and knowledge. Conducting the event improves interoperable communications and exposes participating agencies, organizations, and industry partners to situations requiring the use of an incident command and management system capable of integrating local, regional, state, and federal responders. Collaborative training events provide an opportunity to evaluate programs, equipment, and procedures that support incident response and recovery. Some notable successes are summarized below:

- Project K.I.D., an organization focusing on community development and provision of respite and recovery childcare during disaster response and recovery evaluated several technologies, policies, and procedures during the 2007 and 2008 collaborative training events that addressed the following issues:
 - safe childcare during incident response
 - provision of medical treatment for children in a response environment
 - performance of background checks on volunteers at a response site
 - use of low and high technology tools to identify and track children across jurisdictions
 - parent or guardian and child reunification procedures
 - procedures for establishing computer connections over their own and other networks
- During 2007 event, public safety and USMC personnel reviewing a gateway manual “knew” they could connect public safety and USMC communication systems. Leadership insisted they connect the systems and perform a communications check. While attempting to connect a radio to the gateway, they discovered both connection points were male. An adaptor fixed the problem. Radios are now deployed with an adaptor.
- Participants created cables during the 2007 event to interconnect military communications systems with firefighter gateways. Three months later, the cables were retrieved from storage, enabling communications and coordination between military aircraft and incident command personnel during the 2007 wildfires.
- Performing a UAS experiment during the 2008 event led to the following discoveries and recommendations:
 - develop procedures for operating small unmanned air systems in vicinity of manned aircraft validated need for frequency spectrum evaluation and management, and COML control of wireless access point channel assignments during incident response
 - collaboration sites can be located and maintained on the internet using open source content management systems which facilitate access to information by all participants
 - identified methods and procedures for declassifying imagery at UAS ground stations and transmitting it to end users at an EOC over limited satellite and cellular bandwidth

Looking Forward

Community and regional collaborative training events efficiently prepare first responders and regional partners to address incidents the region is most likely to face. They are a bottom up, low-cost approach to examine regional incident response and recovery issues without the pressures of a top down exercise.

To quote the 9/11 Commission Report, “The first responders of today live in a world transformed by the attacks on 9/11. Because no one believes that every conceivable form of attack can be prevented, civilians and first responders will again find themselves on the front lines. We must plan for that eventuality. A rededication to preparedness is perhaps the best way to honor the memories of those we

lost that day.²” Regional collaborative training events prepare communities for that next event, whether it is a natural disaster or man made.

² The 9/11 Commission, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, Government Printing Office, August 2004.