A CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT APPROACH
TO DISASTER MANAGEMENT: JOINT RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

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PART 9

This article is the ninth article within this series of articles on consequence management. In the previous article we continued with the focus of the seventh instalment in this series on the all-hazard preparedness and response approach, a view on preparedness and response that argues for meaningful and reasonable standardisation of preparedness and response to the non-standardised impacts and consequences of hazards. The previous eighth article discussed further aspects of all-hazard preparedness and response, namely coordinated emergency organisation and incident and disaster classifications.

In this article we will be moving on to mechanics of joint response management and look at the key elements of a joint response management procedure. Please refer back to the discussion of coordinated emergency organisation in the previous article for more background information on joint response management.

Procedural steps in response management
In this section we discuss the practical procedural matters of the who, what, where, when, why and how of response management. The goal of this discussion is to establish a good understanding of the minimum activities required during major incident and disaster response management.

Who is responsible? In keeping with joint response management, the collective known as the Incident Management Team (IMT) is responsible, with each discipline represented at the incident working within its own mandate and area of responsibility and supporting and coordinating with other disciplines through the IMT. We dealt with responsibility in part 6 of this series.

What activities? When dealing with the consequences of the impact of any hazard, at least the following 10 activities should be undertaken during the response process:
1. Detection, notification/ activation and mobilisation
2. Rapid initial assessment
3. Establishing a (on-site) response structure
4. Re-assessment
5. Establishing objectives
6. Deciding on an action plan
7. Implement plan of action
8. Establishing a strategic response structure
9. Monitoring, evaluation and review
10. Closure

Where do these activities take place? The majority of activities will take place on the scene of an incident, where the hazard has impacted. The incident scene layout will be determined by the situation and the agencies involved but can contain a few critical elements that will be covered in a later article. Strategic elements of the activities will take place at off-site facilities forming part of the strategic response structure, while responding agencies will always also keep in contact with their communications, control or dispatching centres.

When are these activities undertaken? The obvious answer is that all of the above happens as soon as possible. The not-so-obvious but important point to remember is that these activities do not necessarily follow neatly in sequence and that there may be considerable overlap between them. For example, re-assessing the situation is a repetitive activity that needs to happen continuously throughout response management, while establishing an off-site strategic response structure may happen very early in the response to an incident or only after considerable time if a situation is slow to develop to a magnitude and severity that requires such a structure.

Why are these activities undertaken? The objectives for each response will be determined in an incident action plan but the general goal is always to protect life, property, the environment and the socio-economic activities of a community. Further elaboration on the why could include reducing impact, preventing further impact and restoring normality while ensuring the safety of the affected as well as the responding services' personnel.

How are these activities undertaken? We hope to provide some insight on the how in the rest of this article, with additional explanations to follow in subsequent articles in this series

Step 1: detection, notification/ activation and mobilisation
During the notification phase, it must be ensured that management and operational staff are informed and mobilised as speedily and effectively as possible. To facilitate the foregoing it is imperative that 24 hour duty and standby rosters are kept current and available at the 24 hour communication facilities for disaster management and all service communications centres that have an emergency and/or disaster response role. Such call-out lists must indicate the first response mobilisation and second line responders clearly.

It is therefore necessary to design standardised response procedures and protocols for specific incidents and also consider variables such as season and time of day.

Step 2: Rapid initial assessment
The basis for any effective response is the initial rapid but accurate on-scene assessment of the situation ie nature of the hazard, resource requirements, immediate threats to people, property and the environment, magnitude and boundaries of current and possible future impacts and to be able to

communicate this information in a predetermined standardised format.

Rapid and effective response can also be facilitated if a standardised initial report-back includes response suggestions and needs. The rapid initial assessment must be as accurate as possible with accurate predictions of what may still occur.

Step 3: Response management structure
Once the initial response has been effected and services arrive on the scene, the process for the implementing of the secondary response must be initiated as soon as possible. This response must be based on the needs received from the scene as a result of the rapid assessment. This response must build on existing response levels and strengthen the deployments and actions on scene.

We will deal in more detail with the establishment of a structure to manage, coordinate and integrate response actions at the scene of an incident in the next article.

Step 4: Re-assess
The first very important step after the Joint Incident Management Team has been established is for them to re-assess the situation. During this process, there are three aspects which must be addressed, namely re-assessing resources, re-assessing the hazard and re-assessing the situation.

Re-assess resources
The team need to establish:
1. Present deployment and how effective it is and

2. Possible further immediate, medium and long-term resource needs.
3. An analysis of special equipment and services and needs must be done at this stage.

When evaluating the mobilising of additional resources the following needs must be taken into account:
1. The type of human resources required ie skills and type of tasks to be performed
2. What equipment and supplies are required and which must come first (Priorities)
3. Who will be responsible for the control of essential supplies
4. Which essential services are required and/or should be restored first (Priorities)
5. Observe and ensure that supply chain management/ logistics are complied with (Accountability) and
6. Possible invoking of mutual aid arrangements and/or other formalised agreements.

Re-assess hazard
A thorough analysis of the potential impact of the hazard must be made. In this regard the following should be assessed:
1. Present impact
2. Potential hazard impact (worst case scenario)
3. Also think beyond present situation
4. Obtain specialist input and
5. Consider implementation of risk specific plans.

Re-assess situation
In this regard the following aspects must be carefully analysed and assessed:

Do a complete evaluation to establish the severity and implications of the problem (direct and indirect implications).

Step 5: Establish incident management objectives
Once the re-assessment has been completed, the team should decide on the incident management objectives and the following should receive attention:
1. Broad statement of intent
2. Think strategically
3. Determine priorities and
4. Ensure public protection and secure affected area.

It is important that emergency worker and public protection be observed throughout the process of setting objectives.

Step 6: Deciding on an action plan
Once the incident management objectives are complete a well framed and well prepared plan of action is essential for the effective execution of the operation.

To plan effectively the following should be considered:
- Situational analysis (clearly mapped)
- Resource status and response levels (accurate recording)
- Think of worst case scenario (think ahead)
- Plan for all phases (response, relief, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction)
- Decide on key objectives and responsibilities
- Consult with external organisations
- Protective actions (response activities)
- Protective action strategies

Look up: Establish present weather and get prediction for next 24 hours. It is important to look at the impact of the weather may have on the situation and what short and long term; changes may are predicted.	⬆
Look around: Look at the topography and natural environment and establish what effect it would have on the hazard behaviour and impact	⬅➡
Look down: Look at the built environment, the natural environment and the economic activities and establish how the hazard can possibly affect these activities. It is also important to consider/establish land owner and type of facility eg key points being affected.	⬇

▶ (response management strategies)
- Incident Communication planning (radios, IT, public and media)
- Develop alternatives (think beyond the normal)
- Review alternatives and
- Decide on plan of action.

Step 7: Implementation

Once a decision has been made on the plan of action, the plan must be communicated clearly to all role-players. In this regard, the following should receive particular attention:
- Communicate objectives, responsibilities, timeframes clearly
- Action tasks clearly and to specific services and/or sections and
- Motivate staff and support implementation throughout.

Step 8: Strategic response management structure

A strategic response management structure can be established if the magnitude and severity of the incident requires higher-level decision-making powers or wider coordination. This relates to the concept of multi-agency coordination and normally includes off-site joint operations and coordination structures where a strategic situation analysis will be performed. Structures to provide relief may be established as part of the strategic response management structure. The strategic response structure would need to consider the same functions and components as at the incident level but with a more strategic coordination and integration perspective. Being part of the response management procedure, it would follow its own iterations of the same process steps already indicated for the procedure,

excluding the step dealing with the establishment of the strategic response structure.

We will further describe strategic response structures in a later article.

Step 9: Monitor/evaluate

The successful implementation and execution of any plan is dependent on sustained and effective monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness.

This must be ensured by observing the following principles:
- To constantly receive and evaluate feedback reports from line departments
- To regularly direct requests and ask questions
- To take note of and observe status changes on an on-going basis
- To analyse actions and anticipate problems/changes (be flexible) and
- To regularly re-assess the situation and the effectiveness of actions and adapt strategies as circumstances dictate.

Repeat steps 1 to 9
Repeat process until incident can be closed. Schedule meetings at specific agreed regular times.

Additional post-incident actions

Close incident and document. Once an incident has been effectively managed and services can return to normal operations, the following actions must be taken:
De-mobilise: Once the response to an incident is completed and there is consensus amongst all role-players that the point has been reached for services to stand-down from the incident and to return to their normal activities, the demobilisation phase is reached.

Ensure that all services have received de-mobilising orders and are reporting to their work stations Complete review/debrief: After each incident, copies of all messages, reports and incident logs of all services must be submitted to disaster management for joint analysis and review.

There must be a formal and structured critical review of all actions and all findings and/or areas of concern must be recorded and included in a report with the necessary recommendations and/or corrective actions to improve response in future.

Ask:
- What worked well?
- What went wrong?
- What can be done better in the future?

Corrective actions

Corrective action plans must be drawn up and are designed to implement changes that are based on lessons learned and recommendations made from reports and reviews after actual incidents or from training and exercises.

Such actions and recommendations must include time frames and deadlines for implementation.

Conclusion

This concludes this ninth article in this series of articles about the wider consequence management practice. This article described the basics of a joint response management procedure and introduced the topics of response management structures and incident site layout that will be discussed in the next two articles. ▲