INCIDENT COMMAND
FIRST RESPONDER/ FIRST-LINE SUPERVISOR

A critical incident is any natural or man-made event, civil disturbance, or any occurrence of unusual or severe nature which threatens to cause the loss of life or injury to citizens, and/or severe damage to property and requires extraordinary measures to protect lives, meet human needs and achieve recovery.

Critical incidents are usually unplanned events. Those responding are normally police, fire, emergency and medical service personnel. These may include large fires, hazardous material incidents, hostage/barricade situations, severe weather events, major crash scenes, etc. There are also events that begin as planned activities and transform into critical incidents. These may include raids, labor strikes and demonstrations.

The onset of a major incident is characterized by:
- Confusion
- Panic
- Rush to the Scene
- Gridlock

Three Response Stages are:
- Crisis Stage
- Management Stage
- Recovery Stage

Incident Command
The first officer or supervisor on scene not directly involved in the incident will assume command of the incident unless relieved by a higher authority. This person will manage incident operations.

Incident Commander
The incident commander is charged with the overall responsibility for all incident activities, including the development and mitigation of the incident action plan and the approval and releasing of resources.

The responding supervisor to the scene will assume the role of incident commander and if relieved, may be reassigned to another position. The supervisor will take action to stabilize the scene by:
- Assessing the situation
- Initiating the seven critical tasks
- Obtain a briefing of the incident
- Will approve all information released to the media and approve plan for returning to normal operation
- Determine whether a unified command structure with assisting agencies as necessary
- Authorize and approve release of information to the news media

Leadership
Traditional leadership or day to day management style:
- Participatory-empower and enable employees

Tactical Leadership:
- Must be autocratic
- Issue immediate and specific orders
- Orders, planning and decision-making must be immediate and decisive

A tactical leader must be decisive and make decisions based on available information.

Issuing orders and directions:
- ensure orders are understood and have them repeated, if necessary

Command presence:
- Communicate confidence and control to your people

The responding supervisor's goals in the crisis stage are to:
- Stabilize the scene
- Limit acceleration/growth of the incident
- Ensure citizen and first responder safety

Action taken by the first responding supervisor can have a significant impact on the size and scope of the incident by reducing the number of injuries and deaths.

Initial actions by first responders and their superiors to effectively manage the controllable factors will have a positive impact on limiting growth and stabilizing the scene.

Situational and organizational needs require that command personnel make long-range decisions and develop an incident action plan that brings the incident under control and moves towards resolution. This plan will allow the management team to address the possibility of incident acceleration.

Specific actions to be taken by the supervisor during a critical incident:

Assess the Situation
- The exact location/address of the incident may be difficult to ascertain
- Size and scope of the emergency
- The initial moments of a critical incident may be difficult to determine
- What happened?
- What are you dealing with?
- What are the dangers?
- Number and type of weapons
- What needs to be done to stabilize the scene?

Seven Critical Tasks
1. Establish and secure communications
2. Identify the announce kill zones / danger zones
3. Establish an inner perimeter
4. Establish an outer perimeter
5. Establish and announce the command post location
6. Establish staging areas
7. Identify and request additional resources

1. Establish and Secure Communications
- Clear the main frequency and request routine radio traffic is taken to an alternate frequency or hold radio traffic
- Designate a radio channel for the incident
- Eventually designate radio interoperability among responding mutual aid organizations

2. Identify the Announce Kill Zones / Danger/Hot Zones
Immediate identification of these areas limits additional exposure to danger for citizens and first responders.
Communicate these areas to first responders as soon as possible.

3. Establish an Inner Perimeter
When the hot zone is identified, initiate actions to contain and control.
- Only uniformed personnel are allowed at inner perimeter locations. Plainclothes officers initially deployed should be removed and replaced with uniformed personnel as soon as possible
- Ensure cover and concealment
- Maintain proper distance
- Protect areas of critical vulnerability: gun shops, power and water plants, hospitals, nursing homes, communication centers

4. Establish an Outer Perimeter
Control movement to and from the scene
Maintain crowd and traffic control: Critical incidents draw huge crowds. These crowds include civilian personnel, those involved in the incident, and emergency responders. Personnel need to secure the scene, contain the incident, protect evidence, and bring about resolution that may well hinge on the effectiveness of the perimeter established.

5. Establish and Announce the Command Post Location
Out of the hot zone. Located in the inner perimeter and out of view of the scene.
Announce the location of the Command Post so all personnel are aware.

6. Establishing Staging Areas
Select an area that is large enough for resources to be located and transferred to the scene as needed.
Staging areas should be located between the inner and outer perimeters to ensure that traffic and crowds do not interfere with the movement of the resources at the scene.
Separate staging areas should be established for tactical (SWAT) operations, mutual aid units, fire department, medical/triage, media, etc.
Assign a representative to each staging area in order to document and coordinate arriving resources and direct them to appropriate areas of assignment or the command post.

7. Identify and Request Additional Resources
Quickly access and request additional resources to reduce response time.
There are a large array of resources that may be needed depending on the situation. Identify what resources are needed, why they are needed, and where they would be utilized.

Some of resources include additional police, fire, emergency medical service, evidence technicians, detectives, hazmat technicians, SWAT team, command post, bomb squad, utility workers (power, gas, water, telephone) etc.

Not all resources will not automatically respond just because they're requested. The SWAT team will not automatically respond because you request them to respond over the radio. As busy as incident command can get, expect resources such as a SWAT team commander or a task force commander to telephone the incident command supervisor who will ask you numerous questions before they send out their teams in order to determine if their services are warranted to respond.

Identify who is in Charge?
This may be an issue with a multiple agency response, multijurisdictional event, multidisciplinary response, or response within a single agency. The need to establish a clear authority is paramount.

The Media
Critical incidents generate a huge media response.
Assign the media a staging area and have a public information officer (P.I.O.) available to speak with the media.

Environment
Although this is uncontrollable, the ability to manage around obstacles presented by the environment is critical to success.

Evacuations
Control movement of people from the hot zone or area of isolation when they are in imminent danger of injury or death. First responders may be able to initiate evacuations. It should only be done if the evacuees can be moved safely and in an orderly manner away from the affected area.

Sheltering in Place
Sheltering in place is a decision that can be made by the first responding supervisor. Usually preferred action in the crisis stage due to the lack of resources. In the case of a hazardous material situation, it should be reviewed and re-evaluated as soon as possible.

Scene Management Stage
When the scene is stabilized and it has been determined that the incident will be ongoing and the danger to citizens and officers still exists, the management stage is initiated.

The management stage is characterized by the arrival of specialized resources. Crowds and media will require an adjustment in management style and the incident commander's leadership must now transition from autocratic to the more traditional empowering style.

The goal of the management stage is to implement a proactive management style that gains control of the scene. It requires a constant reevaluation of the incident, which integrates command, control and communications for all personnel involved.

Recovery Stage
Once the incident has been resolved and order restored, the recovery and mitigation stage is initiated

Ensure Scene Integrity
Throughout the incident, all responding personnel need to be mindful that the scene is rich with evidence which can be crucial to the final disposition of the incident. During the crisis stage, evidence can easily be destroyed unless preservation is constantly reinforced. This carries over to the recovery stage when the incident is considered over.

All personnel involved in the incident are directed to prepare after action reports and a complete review of the incident is initiated to determine the effectiveness of the agency's response. Questions asked:
- What happened?
- What was our response?
- What would we do differently next time?