



INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR SUCCESSFUL PLANNERS

That's the Plan

BY JOANNE CORBY

Working with the Incident Command System

In a post-9/11 world, meeting professionals must add safety and security to their lists of challenges. These issues have always been a concern, but now we have to factor terrorism into the equation. All communities are potential targets for terrorist activities, and being aware of terrorist tactics is an important step in keeping the community prepared.

Terrorism is the unlawful use or threat of violence, especially against the state or the public as a politically motivated means of attack or coercion. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) describes terrorism in terms of domestic, international and online (cyber).

Incident Command System

Your role in the fight against terrorism involves knowledge, preparation and the Incident Command System (ICS). In simplistic terms, ICS is a management tool used to coordinate during a crisis. This system was used by the military during World War I and was adopted in the 1970s by fire services in response to major fires in California. Now, most economically developed countries use some form of ICS.

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Generally speaking, terrorists will target centers of gravity.

Centers of gravity are not only places and events with large numbers of people, but also locations where communities gather at a single location. Centers of gravity could include but are not limited to: public trans-

portation, sporting and special events, government buildings, infrastructure and sites of social significance. The use of ICS can help minimize the impact and counterbalance the economical outcomes of a terrorist attack.

By learning, understanding and using ICS you can better prepare for those uninvited guests. The meetings industry is a complex

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world in which coordinating an event—from a small meeting to a large-scale event—requires cooperation among several providers. A perfect example: During the California fires in the 1970s, municipal, county, state and federal fire authorities collaborated to form a defense against the fires. The common goal was to stabilize the fires and protect life, property and the environment. The post-evaluation identified

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several recurring problems involving multi-agency responses, such as:

- Nonstandard terminology among responding agencies;
- Lack of flexibility;
- Nonstandard and nonintegrated communications;
- Lack of consolidated action plans; and
- Lack of designated facilities.

Efforts to address these difficulties resulted in the development of the original ICS model for effective incident management. Although originally developed in response to wildfires, ICS has evolved into an all-risk system that is appropriate for all types of crises. Much of the success of ICS has resulted directly from applying a common organizational structure, standardized key management principles and common terminology and communications.

ICS training ensures that all who may become involved in a crisis are familiar with ICS principles, terminology and structure. The ICS

structure includes better control, common terminology and universal language, common organizational structure and unity of command.

Finding Success

The level of your success will be measured by your level of collaboration and growth with other industries responsible for protection. ICS uses principles that improve efficiency and effectiveness in a business setting and applies those principles to a crisis.

Regardless of the size of the crisis or the number of providers involved in the response, all crises require a coordinated effort to ensure an effective response and the efficient, safe use of all resources. Everyone must work together to manage the emergency. To coordinate the effective use of all the available resources, providers need a formalized management structure that lends consistency, fosters efficiency and provides direction during the response.

The efforts of the meetings industry, fire rescue, health departments, hospitals and law enforcement agencies aid in the fight against terrorism. The job of preserving quality of life and strengthening the economy is now in our hands.

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