LOGAN SECURITY & INVESTIGATION SERVICES
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LSIS | Report

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CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT:

Scenario Based Planning Influences in Critical Incident Management Strategies

At a time when both foreign and domestic attacks on American citizens have become almost commonplace, the concept of public safety and security has repositioned to the forefront of most individuals' minds. From going to the office on a typical business day, to attending church, to dropping our children off at school for an anticipated day of learning, we all are asking ourselves "*What if?*" What if today is the day a disgruntled employee enters the office with the intent to do harm? What if today is the day an active shooter visits my church? What if today is the day a bullied student enters my child's school with a gun? These are just a few scenarios American citizens are forced to consider on a day-to-day basis.

Due to any number of critical incidents that have occurred such as the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the attack on the World Trade Center, along with the numerous active shooter incidents taking place at schools, churches, and other social gathering places, Americans have become well aware that each and every day presents opportunities where our lives are placed at risk.

In an endeavor to mitigate, if not prevent altogether, the occurrences of such critical incidents, businesses, organizations, governments, and schools have begun to implement various Critical Incident Management (CIM) approaches and strategies that continue to prove successful. One such approach, referred to as Scenario Based Planning (SBP), allows these and other similar groups to act out various possible critical incidents, established through risk/threat assessments and analysis, creating "what if" situations while providing for the testing of preparedness, proactive and reactive measures. As a result, SBP has significantly influenced CIM strategies currently implemented within both the public and private sectors.

About the Firm

Logan Security & Investigation Services is a professional security and forensic investigation consulting firm focused on making the built-environment more secure and safer for its users. Having specialized knowledge and experience in environmental criminology, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, physical and operational security, architecture, and construction, LSIS has a unique understanding and appreciation for how the built-environment contributes to the occurrences of criminal behavior and critical incidents.

Contact Information

If you or your business is interested in learning more about Scenario Based Planning, contact us directly. LSIS can help.

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Scenario Based Planning is a method applicable as a strategic planning exercise while also providing a realistic mechanism for evaluating and modifying existing program plans for responding to critical incidents.

Thinking Points:

1. Do you think about the events that could occur throughout your day and if so, are you prepared?

2. Are you prepared should a critical incident occur at your place of business?

3. Does your business have a Security Management Plan in place and if so, is Scenario Based Planning incorporated?

4. Is your church or your child's school prepared for an active shooter incident?

"SBP generally involves the identification of potential threats along with the development of viable plans and solutions should those threats be realized."

A critical incident can loosely be defined as "*any event or situation that threatens people and or their homes, businesses, or communities.*" Although it is commonly understood that a critical incident could include natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, etc., a critical incident is actually an occurrence outside what might be considered the norm and requiring a rapid response in order to minimize negative results. (Jones, et al., 2000)

The process of managing and controlling the outcome of a critical incident requires the implementation of multiple functions. (Tarlow, 2002) These functions include:

- Assess
- Plan
- Manage
- Control

The fundamental methodology of APMC (Assess, Plan, Manage, Control) provides for a manageable protocol applicable at all phases throughout a critical incident's duration. Applied correctly, APMC allows those involved to understand the conditions and circumstances surrounding the incident, to develop strategic actions of response, and to manage the multi-disciplinary participants involved, all while controlling the environment within specified parameters. Successful application minimizes detrimental impacts while also providing additional information so that the process can be reapplied, improving upon the desired results in the event of reoccurrence.

Scenario Based Planning (SBP)

SBP generally involves the identification of potential threats along with the development of viable plans and solutions should those threats be realized. Identifying possible scenarios that may likely occur allows those responsible for responding to critical incidents the opportunity to anticipate the details of an incident so that effective responses can be formulated. This process also allows for the evaluation of failures so that corrections can be made without suffering an actual loss.

Scenario planning is crucial in the endeavor to secure public safety. To better understand the importance of SBP, consider the following:

"Scenarios are tools for ordering one's perceptions about alternative future environments in which today's decisions might be played out…Scenarios resemble a set of stories, written or spoken, built around carefully constructed plots…Good scenarios are plausible and surprising, they have the power to break old stereotypes, and their creators assume ownership and put them to work. Using scenarios is rehearing the future. By recognizing the warning signs and the drama that is unfolding, one can avoid surprises, adapt, and act effectively."

(Drinkwater, 2003)

Although it is not possible to precisely predict what will happen in the future, it is possible, through proper risk assessments and surveys, to determine what may or what is even likely to occur and to develop viable plans in response.

SBP is a method applicable as a strategic planning exercise while also providing a realistic mechanism for evaluating and modifying (if needed) existing program plans for responding to critical incidents.

SBP Application and Influence

Considering the types and extents of the various critical incidents occurring throughout the United States in recent times, first responders such as law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and health care professionals have learned the importance of SBP and have implemented such measures in both planning and training. Active shooter scenarios at schools for example were not commonly considered by special weapons and tactics teams prior to around 1999. Generally, law enforcement practice involved the establishment of a "perimeter" in an endeavor to contain an active shooter. (Welander, 2006) Such practices have evolved through SBP resulting in quicker response, less casualties, and the more effective elimination of an active shooter threat.

In addition to first responders implementing SBP, the occupants of facilities or otherwise would-be victims are also implementing SBP practices in order to mitigate damages prior to first responders arriving on scene and to better communicate and coordinate with first responders once on scene. Businesses, churches, schools, and other similar organizations are developing security management plans, typically with the assistance of a security professional, to be better prepared if and when a critical incident occurs.

Conclusion

Critical incidents are quickly becoming a part of everyday life. Citizens have become keenly aware of the real possibility that an incident can occur. The expectations that governmental agencies are increasing their own abilities to ensure public safety grows higher as each day passes.

Critical Incident Management focuses on establishing plans and directives for responding to such incidents. The implementation of management methodologies, such as APMC, allows for continuous evaluation and modification of responsive actions.

Additional tools such as Scenario Based Planning further allows both first responders and potential victims to practice and perfect their respective actions to critical incidents not yet realized.

Considering the number of recent critical incident occurrences, all potential participants are realizing the positive benefits for implementing SBP techniques and are setting new standards in regard to public safety and security.

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About the Author

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