

Extended Attack Incident Commander S-300



Pre-Course Work

Use Instructions

S300: Extended Attack Incident Commander, version 1.0

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Mission-Centered Solutions, Inc.
P.O. Box 969
Franktown, CO 80116
303.646.3700
303.646.3720 fax
email: LMcDonald@MCSolutions.com

<http://www.MCSolutions.com>

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Incident Leadership

Few people are born leaders. Leadership is achieved by ability, alertness and experience; by a willingness to accept responsibility; a knack of getting along with people; an open mind; and a head that stays clear under stress.

- Franklin Field

Whether coordinating an emergency incident, managing a technical project, or leading soldiers into battle, leaders practice the art of leadership within the context of many challenges: known vs. unknown; strengths vs. weakness; danger vs. opportunity.

These factors—the *Sun Tzu factors*—test the abilities of leaders in any situation.

The Sun Tzu factors come into play sharply for incident commanders. Working with assembled teams, these leaders are pitted against time in a race to balance these factors while undertaking high-stakes missions.

It is often an uphill battle—working with people you don't know, never having as many resources as you need, dealing with fatigue, never having as much time as you'd like. But the need for success, and the costs of failure, is great.

This is the incident leadership challenge: to achieve success and build synergy with a team of strangers in an environment where many factors work against you or are outside your control. You need to do everything you can to stack the odds in your favor to overcome all the inherent challenges of incident leadership.

The Foundations of Leadership

Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible.

Colin Powell

Former Secretary of State and
Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Failing organizations are usually over managed and under led.

Dr. Warren G. Bennis

Business and government professor at Harvard, MIT, Boston University, and University of Southern California. Award-winning author of dozens of books about leadership and management.

The Art of Leadership

Incident commanders have the core knowledge and skills that enable them to respond to emergencies, but they also have something more: *art*—a mastery of how knowledge, skill, and technique work with and within the environment.

You understand equipment and rescue techniques. You also have skills acquired through training and field experience as well as guidelines for handling different types of situations. You have control over many of these factors.

However, you do not control many variables. You cannot control weather or its effect on the situation. You cannot control all the people involved and affected by the situation.

How you use your tools and knowledge, when and where, within the situation—this is the art. With mastery of the art comes wisdom—an intuitive understanding of the interrelationships among these factors and variables—and with it, perspective and judgment.

The art also includes being able to view the larger picture of the environment, with the understanding of the movement of the

situation— where you can influence it, how you can turn a weakness into a strength, and where best to spend valuable resources.

Just as you must change and adapt your tools and techniques as required by the nature of the emergency, you must likewise use the right leadership tools—at the right time and in the right way—to accomplish your goals as a leader.

Experienced firefighters and commanders have the core knowledge and skills for fighting fire. They also possess techniques for implementing change in the environment, but they also have something more: *art*—a mastery of how knowledge, skill, and technique work with and within the environment.

What you can control, and what you cannot

You understand fire behavior as well as firefighting tactics and procedures. You also have skills acquired through training and field experience as well as tools for handling different situations. You have control over most of these factors.

However, you do not control other variables. You cannot control weather, fuels, slope, and available resources. These variables define the environment or *situation*.

How you use your tools and knowledge, when and where, within the situation—this is the art. With mastery of the art comes an intuitive understanding of the interplay among factors and variables—and with it, wisdom, perspective, and judgment.

Applying principles from Sun Tzu

The *Art of War*, written in 510 B.C. by the military tactician Sun Tzu, describes a philosophy of leadership that remains applicable to this day. The *Art of War* not only outlines the tactics and strategies for warfare but also explains the art of influencing people.

His writings emphasize clear perspective and good judgment:

- identifying what you can control and what you cannot
- recognizing what you know and what you do not know
- finding strategies for turning weaknesses into strengths
- understanding the inherent dangers and opportunities in every situation

The art also includes being able to view the larger picture, with the understanding of the movement of the situation—where can you influence it, how you can turn a weakness into a strength, and where best to spend your valuable resources.

Mastering the art

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.

- John F. Kennedy

35th president of the United States

Education is the mother of leadership.

- Wendell Willkie

Lost the 1940 presidential election to Franklin D. Roosevelt, but F.D.R. had so much respect for Willkie that in 1941 he appointed Willkie his special representative during World War II. Willkie wrote a book during the war that laid the ground work for the United Nations.

A leader's world is complex and dynamic. Mastering the art requires a creative and adaptive approach. Many variables—goals, people, consequences, context, time, risk, reward—come into play in every situation. These variables change constantly.

You need perspective to understand the implications of the variables and flexibility to select appropriate leadership tools and techniques as the situation changes. You must be able to use the right leadership tools—at the right time and in the right way—to accomplish your goals as a leader.

A leader who cannot change techniques and tools as the situation requires will often fail. In some cases, a seemingly small failure can have far reaching impacts to the organization, leader, and other team members. In many situations, leadership failures have resulted in the collapse of careers or entire organizations.

How to turn weakness into strength

The art also includes being able to view the larger picture or perspective of the environment, with the understanding of the movement of the situation—where you can influence it, how you can turn a weakness into a strength, and where best to spend your valuable resources.

Adaptability

Just like the fireground, the leadership environment is constantly moving and changing. The factors are different, as are the tools.

As you must change and adapt your tools and techniques to fight fire effectively in all types of environments and with all kinds of fuels, you must likewise use the right leadership tools—at the right time and in the right way—to accomplish your goals as a leader.

If a leader cannot adapt tactics and tools as the situation requires, he or she will fail. This failure can result in a fireline fatality or a career fatality.

What does a leader do?

You can't force people to do things. Ultimately, they choose to act because they perceive the benefit of doing a task is greater than the cost of not doing it. Leaders influence others to accomplishments that further the organization's goals as well as the team member's personal goals.

Influencing team members is typically seen as the first responsibility of leadership; however, in furthering an organization's goals, leaders also must influence both their peers and the leaders above them.

No one can afford to assume that anyone—including those at the top of the chain of command—has all the answers. Everyone, at every level, can make mistakes or feel pressure to make decisions without adequate information or make decisions based on outdated information. Good leaders provide unvarnished truth in all situations, offering unbiased and viable alternatives.

The leader's goal is create a team in which the combined efforts of the team exceed the individual efforts of the team members. Synergy is the powerful force that allows the team to outperform itself—to accomplish more than what a group of individuals could accomplish.

Synergy requires balancing strengths and weaknesses, known and unknown, within or outside our control, and dangers and opportunities in a way that makes the whole equal more than the sum of the parts.

Levels of Leadership

Generally, the role and focus of a leader depends on the level at which they work. Organizations have four levels of leadership:

- **Leader of Organizations**—These leaders are primarily concerned with providing the vision, direction, and resources to guide the organization into the future.
- **Leaders of Leaders**—Those leading at this level exercise direct leadership over subordinate leaders and indirect leadership over the organization below them.
- **Leader of People**—Those leading on this level exercise the direct, face-to-face supervisory skills required to accomplish tasks and facilitate team building.

He who is to be a good ruler must have first been ruled.

-Aristotle, on Politics

- **Follower**—As a team member, a future leader develops a foundation of values, character, and proficiency. You cannot learn to be an effective leader until you have learned to be a good follower. For this reason, leaders must strive to build good followership skills in their team members.

Although the basic principles of leadership are the same at each level, the way that they are applied and the techniques that must be used are different, depending upon where in the organization a leader is working. It is not uncommon for a leader to be in three or four categories at the same time.

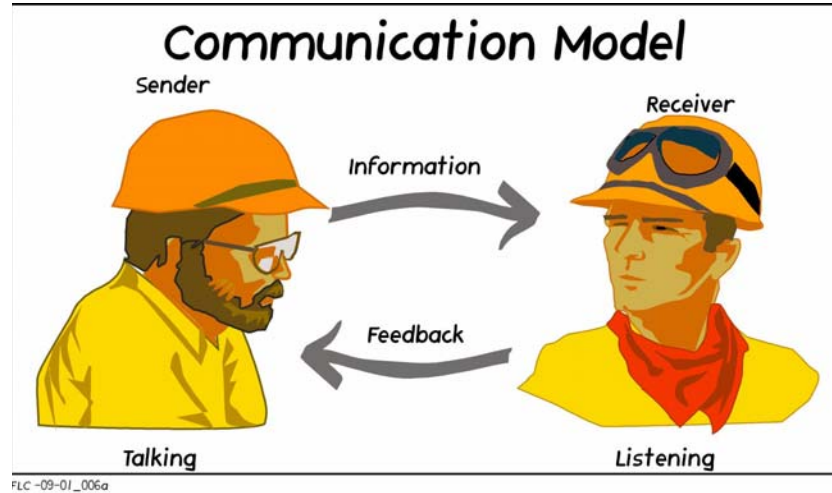
Communication—the Tool of Leadership

Leadership is the art of influencing and directing others to an assigned goal in such a way as to obtain their obedience, confidence, respect, and loyal cooperation. Military leadership is the same art demonstrated and applied within the profession of arms.

Leadership for Commanders of Divisions and Higher Units,
U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1949

Communication represents the *how* of leadership. You cannot lead unless you can communicate. Communication is to the leader what water is to the body.

Communication is the exchange of information and ideas. Effective communication occurs when others understand precisely what you are trying to tell them, and you understand exactly what they are trying to tell you.



Communication and the Team

Effective communication is the prerequisite for the synergy that creates the kinds of bonds that allow your team to follow you and act appropriately during a fire. It is the glue for all teamwork and team activity.

For communication to be effective, the role of the sender and receiver must switch frequently. After receiving a message, the listener acknowledges the message by providing feedback. Feedback can be sent verbally or non-verbally.

The message that you communicate is not just the words you speak. The packaging of your communication—your tone, voice, body language, and gestures all combine to communicate your message to the listener.

You must win your team's trust and confidence before, rather than on, an incident. How and what you communicate can enhance or damage the strength of the relationship between you and your team crew. Crew discipline and cohesion depend on the strength of this relationship.

Because people listen to leaders who listen to them, you must work hard at listening to your team. Effective communication implies that your team listens to and understands you. Becoming a skilled listener is hard work and takes constant practice.

The Incident Leadership Challenge

Fire is the test of gold; adversity of strong men.

- Seneca, A.D. 64

Factors in the leadership environment constantly change, creating new challenges, but nowhere do they come into focus more sharply than during emergency incidents on the fireline. Stress, danger, exhaustion, dehydration, fear, and confusion can erode performance and your leadership ability during a wildland fire.

Barriers in High Risk Environments

Several factors increase the challenges of all high risk environments, creating barriers to effective leadership. Do they apply to you?

- Time pressure
- High stakes
- Inadequate information
- Ambiguous objectives
- Poorly defined procedures
- Rapidly changing conditions
- Requirement of team coordination

Complicating Factors

Other factors also produce challenges to cohesion and leadership in the fireline environment:

- **It's come as you are.** There's no train-up time at the fire.
- **Weather and terrain** are key elements contributing to the situation, creating complications unique to this leadership environment.
- **Continuous operations** become the requirement when responding to disasters and large-scale emergencies. Crew members never have enough sleep, food, or water. A leader must know when the team is beyond acceptable risk.
- **Luck plays a role.** The fire provides few opportunities. Any incident can present serendipitous moments. Leaders must recognize and exploit those opportunities to be successful.
- **Low tech and high tech are interwoven.** In case of a failure in technology, a leader must always be ready to return to the lowest

common denominator. In addition, the availability of technology at the incident command level can cause a perception mismatch between the view of the Incident Commander and the view of the ground observer.

- **Transition from high to low stress** can be unexpected and immediate. Crew members and their leaders must be able to switch gears quickly.

With all these challenges, strong leadership emerges as the most critical element on the fireline. In this context, your duty to become the best leader that you can be translates into a solemn responsibility. Lives are on the line, and your leadership skills can be the deciding factor.

This training program is a starting point and not an end. As a leader you must continue to develop your art for the rest of your life through study, introspection, and practice. This program serves only as a step in the journey.

Summary

- How you use your tools and knowledge, when and where, within the situation—this is the art. With mastery of the art comes wisdom.
- You must be able to use the right leadership tools—at the right time and in the right way—to accomplish your goals as a leader.
- Although the basic principles of leadership are the same, the way that they are applied and the techniques that must be used are different, depending upon where in the organization a leader is working.
- Effective communication is the prerequisite for the synergy that creates the kinds of bonds that allow your team to follow you and act appropriately during a fire. It is the glue for all teamwork and team activity.
- Factors in the leadership environment constantly change, creating new challenges, but nowhere do they come into focus more sharply than during emergency incidents.

Composition of a Leader

As a leader, you must motivate and supervise people. These are very human—not technical—tasks. To do this well, you must understand how you and other people work, both generally and individually.

You have a responsibility to understand human behavior, teach it to others, and integrate it into your operational environment.

Studying Decision Making

Metacognition refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes or anything related to them.

Professor John Flavell

Stanford University Department of Psychology

Being a leader means that you must be willing and able to evaluate your own decision process and learn to improve it. Talking about decisions with the crew and being able to analyze past decisions are important means of developing an error-resilient crew.

Analyzing the decision making process is one form of *metacognition*. In simple terms, metacognition is the process of thinking about how you think.

For decision making, it means developing knowledge about how you process information when you make decisions. The better you understand this process, the easier it is to improve your abilities.

Understanding how you make decisions has far-reaching benefits:

- By breaking down individual components of a decision, you learn how to better analyze your own decision-making and target specific areas for improvement.
- It provides a mechanism, vocabulary, and context for discussing performance issues that relate to decision-making. This benefit is particularly useful for debriefings.

- An analysis of past decisions helps you learn how to do things better in the future.

Decision Making Model

The best way to look at the mental process of making decisions is through a model. Using a model offers several benefits:

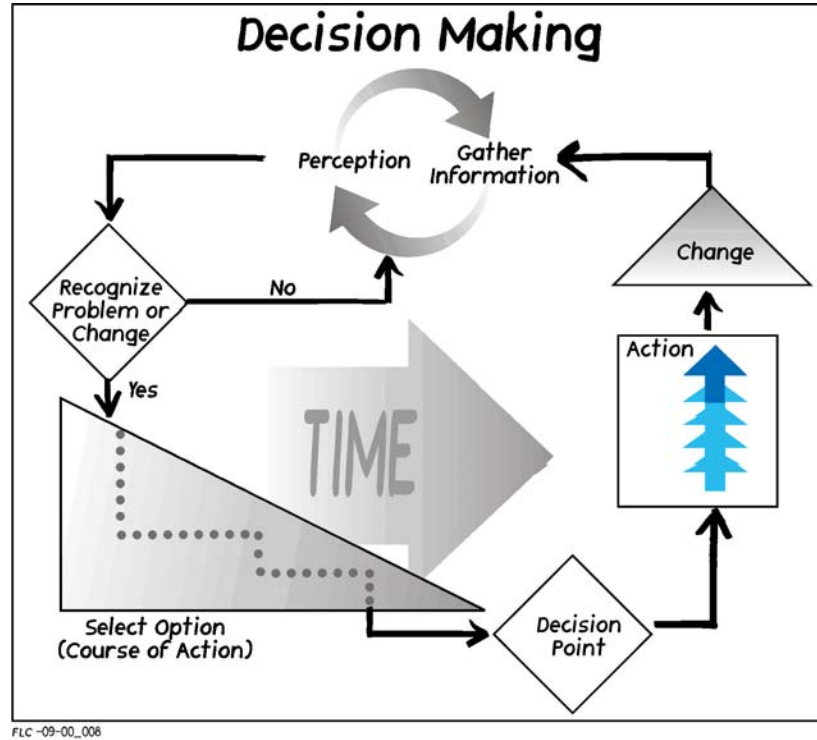
- Provides visualization for a mental process
- Shows sequence as well as cause and effect
- Shows human machine in ideal conditions
- Enables you to isolate and understand elements that cause problems

The scientific community has developed numerous models to describe decision making. The one used here is a distillation of the work of many scientists, particularly Judith Orasanu, Gary Klein, and Dr. Mary Omodei.

The model shows a process that people already do naturally. Everyone generally goes through this process when making decisions. You don't think about what you are doing—you just do it.

This model consists of five primary processes:

1. Situation awareness
2. Recognition
3. Analysis and selecting a course of action
4. Decision point
5. Action



Situation Awareness Cycle

The first qualification in a general is a cool head—that is, a head which receives accurate impressions, and estimates things and objects at their real value.

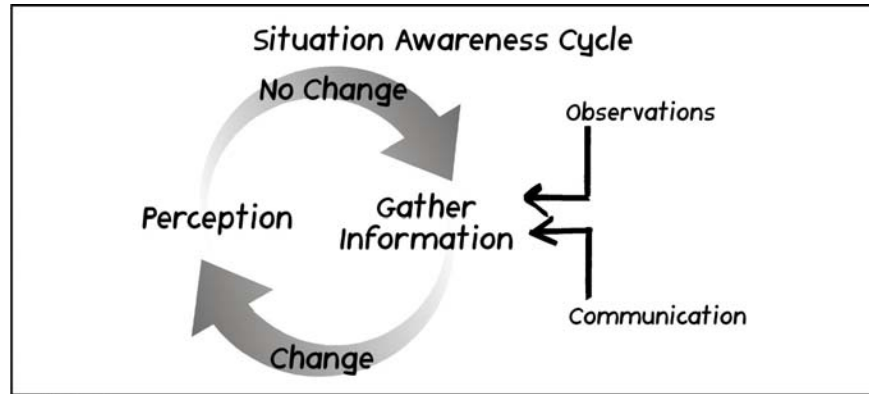
Napoleon Bonaparte

Maxims, LXXIX, 1831

How well your perception matches reality is called Situation Awareness. If your situation awareness is high, you have an accurate perception of reality.

The idea is that your perception doesn't change the reality of the situation, so you must make sure that your perception closely matches the situation. In the end, when you pit perception against reality, reality always wins.

The first process in the decision making model is the Situation Awareness cycle. It is a cycle because Situation Awareness is dynamic—constantly changing and getting updated. This cycle continues as long as you are awake.



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Perception

Everyone starts with an initial perception of any given situation. Just as when you came to this class, you had an initial perception—call it a size-up—about the class. Was it going to be boring? Interesting? Another safety course? But your initial perception was only the starting point.

Between then and now, you have continuously been updating your assessment—call it your perception. You have been gathering more information and changing your perception about the situation.

Information Gathering

There are two things over which you have complete authority, dominion and control: your mind and your mouth.

- Molefi Asante, renowned African scholar

New information potentially changes the initial perception. We gather information through observation and communication.

Observation—Gathering information through the senses—what we see, smell, hear, taste, and touch all fall into this category.

Communication—what people tell you, what you read, answers to questions you ask.

Filtering and Focusing

Paying attention is one part of situation awareness, but even more important is knowing what to pay attention to—knowing what is important. How well do you extract the salient points from your environment?

Your initial perception and subsequently updated perception are subject to filtering and focusing.

We constantly filter information. Our senses constantly search the environment, picking up data such as the temperature, background noises, wind, odors, body language, voices, and words. We also produce a lot of internal information: thoughts about what to do next, what just happened.

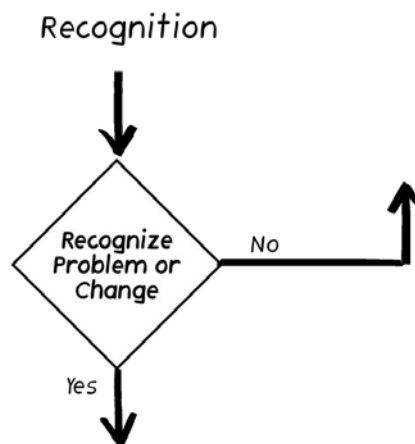
Your experience level in the environment heavily influences your ability to filter out distractions and unimportant details and focus on the most salient points.

The more experienced you are in a situation, the better you can filter the most important cues in the environment from those that are secondary. This ability to filter gives experienced people a natural edge in situations that are confusing, complex, or time-critical because they can more quickly gather the critical information, recognize the need for a decision, and move forward in the decision-making cycle.

Distraction

Distraction is considered a major barrier to the decision making process. Distraction shifts focus from critical elements to something that is not as important, and a leader's job has many inherent distractions.

Recognition



Most decision making on the fireline entails responding to or adapting to a changing environment. Recognition is when you

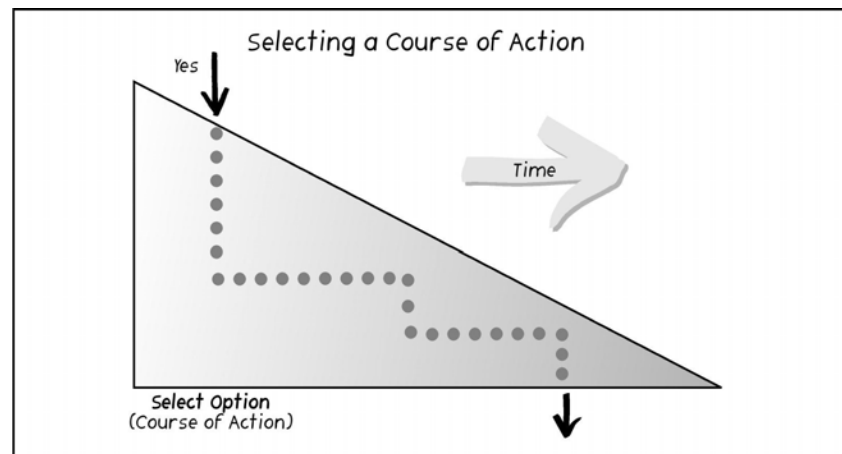
determine that something needs to be done and you want to impact your environment in some way.

A variety of situations warrant action: a realization of a problem, recognition of an opportunity, a need for change in tactics, or a change in priorities.

Selecting a Course of Action

In any action you must balance the inevitable cost in lives against the objectives you seek to attain. Unless the results to be expected can reasonably justify the estimated loss of life the action involves, then for my part I want none of it.

General Matthew B. Ridgeway



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Selecting a course of action involves understanding the factors, options, and risks associated with those options. You select a course of action based on your experience and perception.

If time permits, the process can include formally weighing the cost and benefits of a variety of options. In time-critical situations, it requires a much quicker process.

How well and how quickly you select an option depends upon many factors, including your relative experience in the environment. An inexperienced person may not have many options and may lack the experience to evaluate them effectively.

You weigh the risks and select an option based mostly on your experience. In large measure, your experience and knowledge determine how many options you have and how well you evaluate them.

When you select a course of action, usually you mentally simulate how it might turn out—compare it with other similar experiences and give it a trial run in your mind.

The concept is a lot like having a set of slides depicting your experiences. You compare the current situation to the slides in your slide tray of experience.

When the time pressure is on, experienced decision makers have a natural advantage: they have more slides and thus more options. When they recognize a solution that—when simulated in their minds—provides a viable course of action, they usually select that option and stop the process.

Choosing a course of action based on previous experience is called Recognition Primed Decision-Making (RPD). Our ability to recognize situations is based in our old or *primitive* brain.

RPD is a *natural* decision process, which is also used by other mammals. Being more primitive and tied to our survival mechanisms, RPD is understandably very fast and it explains why experienced leaders rarely run out of time when making a decision.

RPD doesn't necessarily come up with the best solution for a given situation, just the first viable one. You can only make a recognition primed decision if you have a previous experience—a memory slide—that you can recognize as being similar to the problem or situation you face.

Decision Point

The final part of the decision process is moving to act. Time marches on. If you decide not to act, the environment does not change.

Sometimes you may not act on a decision because you determine that more analysis is needed. The cycle returns to SA, but with the benefit of the processing that you did up to this point.

Time and Decisions

He who gains time gains everything

Benjamin Disraeli

The window of opportunity for making a decision is based on time. The situation awareness cycle is internal and runs continuously;

decision- making is where you and the outside world interact. Therefore, all decision making is on a backdrop of time.

The amount of time you have to make a decision depends upon how fast the environment changes and how much you need to change the environment. You cannot slow time, only speed your decision process.

Risk Management Process

A standardized risk management process can assist you in making decisions that best balance risk versus gain. This process helps identify potential threats to or arising from a course of action. It uses a deliberate decisional process and risk framework that shadows and reinforces the individual decision-making process.

These are the primary components of a standard risk management process:

1. Situation Awareness

- Gather information regarding objectives, communication, who is in charge, and incident status.

2. Hazard Assessment

- Estimate potential hazards.
- Identify tactical hazards.
- Identify other safety hazards.

3. Hazard Control

- Identify potential controls.

4. Decision Point

- Make sure controls are in place for identified hazards.
- Make sure selected tactics are in line with incident objectives.
- Make sure instructions have been given and are understood.

5. Evaluate

- Assess experience level in context of local factors.

- Assess distraction level from primary tasks.
- Assess fatigue or stress.
- Assess indications of hazardous attitude.
- Assess changing factors in situation.

Following a standard risk management process helps you make sure that you consider the primary components of the environment, identify the risks, and apply controls to help mitigate unnecessary risk. Using such tools helps reinforce good decision making when barriers such as stress arise.

Summary

- Talking about decisions with the crew and being able to analyze past decisions are important means of developing an error-resilient crew.
- In the end, when you pit perception against reality, reality always wins.
- Paying attention is one part of situation awareness, but even more important is knowing what to pay attention to—knowing what is important.
- Distraction shifts focus from critical elements to something that is not as important, and a leader's job has many inherent distractions.
- The situation awareness cycle is internal and runs continuously; decision making is where you and the outside world interact. Therefore, all decision making is on a backdrop of time.
- A standardized risk management process helps identify potential threats to or arising from a course of action. It uses a deliberate decisional process and risk framework that shadows and reinforces the individual decision-making process

Command Climate

*What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear
what you are saying.*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882

American author, poet, and philosopher

Command climate is different than organizational culture.

Organizational culture refers to the environment of the wildland fire community and of the many agencies within it. Agency leaders, National and Regional Response Teams (NRT/RRT), State and Federal On Scene Coordinators (SOSC/FOSC), and Industry Response Teams establish the response community culture of wildland fire.

Command climate refers to the environment within the influence of a particular leader or chain of command. Command climate describes the atmosphere that the leader creates to lead the team within the operational environment.

Subordinates share a perception of the command climate based on their understanding of how they are expected to perform, how they expect to be treated, and how they must conform to their leaders' individual styles and personalities.

Healthy command climate is essential to the unity of command of the leadership team and for unified effort within the staff. When subordinates look at the leadership team on an incident, they look for several indicators to determine whether or not they can trust the chain of command.

A unified leadership team sends a powerful message. When all members of the leadership follow the same priorities and go out of their way to reinforce the IC's intent through their actions and words, people in the field develop a strong sense of trust for the team. Unity of command dispels the propensity to second-guess command decisions as subordinates recognize that the leadership team moves as one and is solidly in charge.

Command climate also directly impacts an organization's ability to recover from error. An unhealthy command climate can stifle

communication and inhibit resources from reporting problems. Good communication and interaction among the team and leaders are the first line of defense against error chains.

A healthy command climate empowers subordinate leaders to exercise individual initiative and take appropriate risks and actions when the situation requires. At times, on dynamic incidents, centralized control becomes impossible or communications are lost.

A command climate that reinforces a *zero defect* mentality creates conditions in which people tend to wait for guidance before taking action, often losing the opportunity to gain ground on the situation or even maintain control.

Command Presence

Thus it is said that one who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes meet with defeat. One who knows neither the enemy nor himself will invariably be defeated in every engagement.

- Sun Tzu

The Art of War, 500 B.C.

More than anything else, command presence sets the tone for command climate. Command presence describes how a leader presents himself or herself to others—the myriad of personal attributes and behaviors that communicate that the leader is worthy of trust and respect.

A leader's character is the foundation upon which command presence is built. People's perception of their leader's character begins the moment they begin interacting. Leaders reveal their character in every interaction, and their character shapes and permeates the command presence they project.

People in an organization are constantly sizing up the situation and their leader. They are quick to pick up on any disconnect between what the leader says and does.

Another component of command presence—demeanor—communicates volumes to others. Dress, body language, and poise all play a large part in the image and message projected. Effective

leaders project an image that is calm, organized, and focused on success.

Constancy in demeanor provides a strong anchor point upon which team members can key their behaviors. It minimizes hesitancy and uncertainty because a consistent demeanor modulates overreaction to changes and new situations.

Imagine a pendulum hanging from a string. Unintended agitation occurs at the top of the string when a leader's character or stress reactions affect their ability to clearly articulate their intent and make effective decisions. Vacillation occurs when the leadership team is not unified or sends out conflicting messages.

The smallest movement at the top of the string causes the pendulum to swing dramatically, affecting the arc and speed of the mass at the bottom.

The people and the resources at the ground level find themselves trying to keep up and react to the erratic changes in the pendulum's speed and direction. This confusion creates the perception that the leadership team can't get its act together and contributes to a negative perception of the leader.

Consistency provides a strong anchor point from which others can key their behaviors. It minimizes the swinging of the pendulum and inspires confidence in the leaders' abilities.

The Sun Tzu factors apply directly to the behavior of incident leaders through a leader's most challenging aspect of duty: know yourself.

- Known versus Unknown
- Can control versus Can't control
- Strengths versus Weaknesses
- Danger versus Opportunity

Recognizing your abilities and limitations, seeking out feedback, learning from mistakes, knowing where to improve and when to seek out others with complimentary strengths—these are all behaviors crucial to leadership success and directly affect the command presence that you convey.

Creating an Effective Command Climate

*One whose upper and lower ranks have
the same desires will be victorious.*

- Sun Tzu

The Art of War, 500 B.C.

An effective command climate builds mutual trust and respect and allows subordinate leaders to show initiative and take appropriate actions as the situation requires.

It also creates an environment where people feel comfortable raising issues that may be problems and engaging in healthy debate over potential courses of action.

First Impressions

A leader's ability to create a positive first impression is the essential first step in establishing a healthy command climate.

When first stepping into any new situation or meeting someone new, people immediately start gathering information, making observations, and becoming oriented to the new situation or person.

The process is circular: while you formulate your first impression, others are formulating their first impression of you.

A leader makes an impression continuously through verbal and non-verbal communication and both conscious and subconscious behavior.

Once an initial perception is formed, it is difficult to change. Whether that impression is accurate or fair does not really matter. As the old saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

From this first impression and those that follow, leaders set the tone and tempo of command for the incident. Leaders create situation awareness of themselves in others.

Managing Fear

A leader who sets a standard of "zero defects, no mistakes" is also saying "Don't take any chances. Don't try anything you can't already do perfectly, and for heaven's sake don't try anything new."

That organization will not improve; in fact, its ability to perform the mission will deteriorate rapidly. Accomplishing the Army's mission requires leaders who are imaginative, flexible, and daring. Improving the Army for future missions requires leaders who are thoughtful and reflective. These qualities are incompatible with a "zero-defects" attitude.

- Army Field Manual 22-100

Army Leadership

Effective leaders pay close attention to the effect of fear on subordinates.

If subordinates avoid confrontation or conflict, fail to speak up when they notice something wrong, or fail to take the initiative when appropriate, the team loses its ability to identify and mitigate errors.

This risk-averse climate is common unless a leader proactively creates a healthy command climate that reduces organizational fear.

At the same time, the leader can use the positive aspects of fear to create a strong commitment to the team, to conform to standards, and to maintain an appropriate perspective on risk versus gain.

A leader's own fears also can have an enormous impact on his or her effectiveness. A fear of responsibility, fear of failure, anxiety over the media—all these fears and others can cause a leader to over-delegate or become distant. Leaders have the duty to identify and mitigate the impacts of their own fears.

Communication

Communication is the primary tool used to establish command climate. First impressions and managing fear—these depend on the leader's effectiveness as a communicator. The ability to communicate is universally rated as one of the most important leadership behaviors in any survey on leadership.

Communication is the foundation that builds trust and enables a team to develop cohesion. Communication allows a leader to communicate objectives and intent. Communication breaks error chains. Communication increases situation awareness.

Human interaction is the engine of an effective team, and communication is the oil that minimizes friction and allows the parts to function effectively.

Sources of Power

Leaders can draw from several sources of power:

- Position Power
- Reward Power
- Discipline Power
- Expert Power
- Respect Power

Being able to use the appropriate source of power is a component of situational leadership. Your ability to read the situation and apply the appropriate source of power enhances your ability to create an effective command climate.

Leadership Styles

Strange as it seems, great leaders gain authority by giving it away.

- Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale

senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution

Choosing a leadership style—directing, participating, or delegating— depends on a number of factors:

- Time available
- Values at risk
- Information available
- Clarity of objectives
- Standardization
- Stability of conditions
- Level of coordination
- Experience of resources

Your choice of leadership style directly impacts how people respond to you and, ultimately, how well the operation runs.

In simple terms, the power paradox describes the seeming contradiction that you gain power by giving it away.

If you allow subordinates' control over and input into the mechanisms that control their lives it strengthens your ability to lead them: Involvement increases commitment.

If you want respect as a leader, give respect to subordinates. If you want the trust of your subordinates, give trust to them first.

Gauging the Command Climate

A leader must constantly update their own situation awareness regarding the command climate. The following are characteristic of an effective command climate:

- Clear priorities and goals
- Unified leadership team
- Clearly stated standards and expectations
- Consistency in holding people accountable
- Willingness to admit error and to learn from mistakes
- Willingness to seek and act upon feedback from subordinates
- Willingness to delegate authority
- Willingness to recognize and address stress and negative conflict
- Good role models who set the example
- Open communication

Leaders must have their finger on the pulse of the operation to recognize failures in any of these areas and to correct errors at their starting point.

Summary

- *Command climate* describes the atmosphere that the leader creates to lead the team within the operational environment. When subordinates look at the leadership team on an incident, they use the command climate to determine whether or not they can trust the chain of command.

- A leader's character is the foundation upon which command presence is built. Leaders reveal their character in every interaction, and their character shapes and permeates the command presence they project.
- Recognizing your abilities and limitations, seeking out feedback, learning from mistakes, knowing where to improve and when to seek out others with complimentary strengths—these are all behaviors crucial to leadership success and directly affect the command presence that you convey.
- An effective command climate builds mutual trust and respect and allows subordinate leaders to show initiative and take appropriate actions as the situation requires.
- This risk-averse climate is common unless a leader proactively creates a healthy command climate that reduces organizational fear.
- Communication is the primary tool used to establish command climate. The ability to communicate is universally rated as one of the most important leadership behaviors in any survey on leadership.
- Strange as it seems, great leaders gain authority by giving it away.

Commander's Guidance and Leader's Intent

As a commander, he is expected to choose command over action, working from strategic levels rather than the task level.

- Alan Brunacini

Phoenix Fire Chief

I hold the view that the leader must know what he himself wants. He must see his objective clearly and then strive to attain it; he must let everyone else know what he wants and what are the basic fundamentals of his policy. He must, in fact give firm guidance and a clear lead.

- Bernard L. Montgomery

British Field Marshal during World War II

Formulating guidance and communicating intent to staff and team leaders is critical to operational success. Well-defined guidance and intent empowers people to do the things needed to get the job done at the tactical level.

A commander's job is to maintain the big picture. If focus shifts from developing strategy to worrying about tactical problems and decisions, confusion is created among subordinates, and the commander runs the risk of losing situation awareness over the entire incident.

To empower tactical actions that achieve objectives, a leader must make and communicate decisions faster than the situation changes.

Decisional space is the difference between the amount of time available to make a decision and the point at which the environment has changed enough so that the decision is no longer relevant to the problem.

The amount of decisional space available to a leader directly impacts their ability to consider options and alternatives. To be effective, a leader needs to be able to judge environmental factors in relation to one another to make the best possible decision in the time available.

An incident leader's perspective is gained by a continuous process of balancing the Sun Tzu factors within the leadership environment and asking three internal questions in relation to the situation:

- What's going on? Where are we? Simple as it sounds, accurate situation awareness is a big challenge. The lag time between events on the ground and reports about these events significantly impacts the awareness of the commander.
- **What should be happening? Where are we going?** In order to define an end state that equals success, leaders at all levels must understand the intent and objectives of the leaders above them. Each leader must overlay that understanding onto the current situation and available resources. The leader can then determine what success ought to look like.
- What must I do to get us there? Once you know where you are and where you want to be, you can assess the difference between the two and provide direction.

Commander's Guidance

Commander's guidance starts with the leader understanding the intent of the leader above him or her. This understanding comes from analyzing written and verbal guidance about incident objectives and priorities, asking questions, and seeking clarification.

Goals and Objectives—To successfully manage an incident, an incident commander must take the incident objectives and translate them into achievable goals and objectives that the resources on scene can accomplish.

Communicate goals that meet the SMART criteria:

- **Specific**—Vague objectives produce vague results. A specific goal narrows the target and clearly defines success. Specific goals communicate leader's intent.
- **Measurable**—Without the ability to measure progress and completion, how can anyone know if a goal has been accomplished? Building in measurement ensures accountability and the ability to check progress.
- **Attainable**—A military saying goes like this: *Amateurs talk tactics, professionals talk logistics*. In other words, resources and acceptable risk levels always limit what you can accomplish.

Goals must be achievable within actual constraints, or inevitably frustration will begin to sap the strength and energy of the team.

- **Realistic**—Achieving relevance focuses on the team result as defined by the vision, mission, and higher leader's intent.

The Pareto Principle is a mathematical equation that proves that teams get 80% of their results from only 20% of their total efforts. A large percentage of a team's effort can be inefficient and subject to the law of diminishing returns. Make this your goal: to get the maximum return in results for the minimum investment of the team's time, resources, and energy.

- **Timely**—Assigning specific timelines for completion or progressive steps assists in accountability and awareness of when things are getting done or when tasks are straying off course.

Timelines also establish priorities for key goals that allow the team to focus scarce energy and resources to the appropriate places and events. This gives a team great flexibility in adapting to changes and unexpected events.

After agreeing to the incident objectives, the leader must communicate these objectives to team leaders and provide enough additional guidance so they can plan courses of action.

The concept applies to any leader on an incident, not just the incident commander. All leaders must take their assignment, derive the intent, establish goals and trigger points, and communicate this information down the chain of command.

This may include guidance in many areas:

- Criteria for engagement or disengagement
- Critical decision points that may affect success
- Use of time
- Reconnaissance and scouting including use of imagery

A leader does not necessarily need to cover each of these areas; the requirements are situationally dependent. However, the leader needs to be aware that team leaders and their team members need a framework for conducting operations.

Leader's Intent

...[T]he prevalence of the use of independent action, whether desired or not, emphasizes the need for specific training for such operations.

- Mike Rohda

Battalion Chief, Orange County California
Command during Catastrophic Interface Wildfires

The standard operating procedures accordingly should recognize the crucial importance of improvisation and provide suitable frameworks for it, rather than repressing it.

- Yehezkel Dror

Managing Disaster, Strategy and Policy Perspectives, 1988

With independent action, you get a lot of productivity. It's just that, as IC, you may not know, or be able to direct, what that productivity is.

- Assistant Chief Tim Sappok

California Department of Forestry

Successful operations are built on the ability of leaders to define and communicate their intent so that it empowers their subordinates to exercise their initiative. Everyone, from Section Chief to the last firefighter, must be able to define the end state and have a shared understanding of the purpose behind the task.

Dynamic and chaotic incidents create conditions where it is impossible to project centralized control over the incident. The situation unfolds and changes too quickly for the ICS doctrinal planning processes to react and issue new instructions.

The doctrine of leader's intent began with Napoleon at the end of the 18th Century. During this period in history, when improvements in weapons and tactics made situations on the battlefield develop faster and faster, leaders began to realize that time was their real enemy. The old micro- management methods no longer worked because, before an order could travel from general to subordinate, the situation had already changed.

In 1830, Carl Von Clausewitz wrote *On War*, a strategic treatise on par with Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. Von Clausewitz captured the lessons of Napoleon and greatly expanded modern strategic doctrine.

He stated that friction, danger, and uncertainty would constantly combine on the battlefield to create the fog of war, a metaphor for

the chaotic conditions where centralized command and control becomes impossible.

Von Clausewitz also stated that during these periods of chaos that the moral factors of an Army—their cohesion, character, initiative, and empowerment—would be the deciding factor.

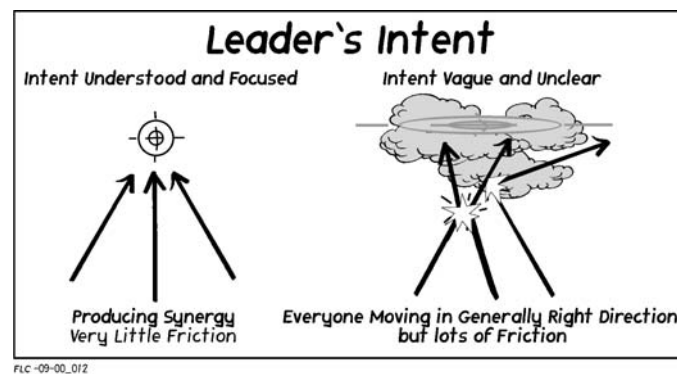
The Prussian army took this foundation for leader's intent and turned it into *Auftragstaktik*, or mission-oriented orders.

Auftragstaktik is defined as the principle of empowering subordinates to exercise initiative in the fluid, chaotic conditions of the battlefield by ensuring that they understand the purpose behind their mission.

A time will come when reality places teams in a battle against the environment, and the commander's direct guidance will be out of the picture. Their chances for success hinge on the quality of the empowerment that their leaders have given them.

Leader's intent became the tool to overcome the time barrier. In a few sentences, commanders could communicate the *why* or intent behind a plan or order.

Leader's intent originated as a statement of what soldiers must do to succeed and what that success looks like—the end state. Leaders made sure that people executing the plan were aware of their leader's intent at least two echelons above them.



Today, leader's intent achieves the same goals. A well-defined end state, along with the understanding of the big picture, allows team leaders and crew members to adapt and exercise initiative when the situation changes.

The ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in the operational environment enables friction to thrive. Leader's intent reduces this friction and minimizes team dysfunction.

An unclear or ambiguous intent can lead to misperceptions on the part of subordinates, and they can run into each other while they all strive to accomplish what they believe is the goal. Clear focus, as provided by leader's intent, enables the team to work together toward a common goal.

Components of Leader's Intent

Good leader's intent breaks an assignment into three parts, providing clear guidance in each area:

- Task—What is to be done?
- Purpose—Why it is to be done?
- End state—How should it look when complete?

Leader's intent is a powerful tool that gives the team a focused flexibility and serves as one of the cornerstones for building synergy in teams.

The task defines the objective or goal of a specific assignment. What needs to be done?

It's important to clarify purpose because it allows the team to get the job done in your absence or when circumstances require a change in the plan.

We've all heard the phrase No plan survives the first bullet. Actually, the leader's intent is the only part of the plan to survive the first bullet.

When the team clearly understands the intent behind instructions, they can use their initiative and find a way to accomplish your intent, even if the conditions at the time you assigned the task radically change.

In a mission-oriented environment, the desired end state is a description of how things look when the mission is successful. The desired end state includes the success criteria and acceptable risk for that assignment.

Here is an example of a statement describing leader's intent:

By end of shift, we successfully will hold the line in Division Z, by

1. completing all line construction before dark,
2. catching all spots crossing Ash Creek, and
3. completing the burnout to Hugatree Road after the line is complete.

Time and Decision Making

You can ask me for anything you want, except time.

- Napoleon, in a briefing to his generals

While setting the direction, leaders constantly weigh options and make decisions in a time-constrained environment.

The challenge is to maintain a balance between recognition-primed intuitive decision making and analytical decision making. The first solution to come to mind is not necessarily the best, but leaders do not always have the luxury to carefully analyze and compare each option available.

Recognition-primed decision making and analytical decision making both have positives and negatives. Each method has an appropriate time and place. The goal is to effectively practice situational leadership to determine the appropriate method for the circumstances.

One method of using time efficiently is to rely on doctrinal decision making tools such as those in the *Incident Response Guide*, including the following:

- Risk Management Process
- Trigger Points
- LCES
- Downhill Checklist
- Safety Zone Guidelines
- Fire Orders

Familiarity with these tools enables you to mitigate the inevitable disadvantage of not having enough time.

The nature of incident response automatically puts management teams in the reaction mode at the start. However, the goal of

incident management is to be able to affect change on the environment faster than the environment can affect change on you.

The key to maintaining initiative is anticipating the environment. A proactive position requires an ability to anticipate possible changes in the environment early enough to make plans and initiate actions before losing the window of opportunity. Relative superiority depends on a leadership team's ability to anticipate a changing environment.

One way of moving toward a proactive stance is to maintain a simultaneous offense and defense: for example, aggressive patrolling for residual fire while pursuing perimeter control in a wildland fire-urban interface scenario.

Turning Intent into Action

Achieving a team result in chaotic conditions requires leaders to communicate their intent effectively and in a way that enables their people to turn that intent into focused and decisive action.

Undefined end state leads to vague objectives

An ambiguous or undefined end state leads to vague objectives. Such objectives quickly become irrelevant because they are not meaningful to the work of those on the incident.

If the objectives lack relevance and focus, no one pays attention to them; instead, people work from a set of intuitive objectives made up on the spot, which may or may not be what the commander would have wanted.

Tactical action is what turns the stated objectives into reality.

Confusing direction or micro-management of tactics creates resentment and frustration with the people whose efforts determine the success or failure of the incident management team.

Too much direction stifles the ability to adapt to changing conditions. Vague guidance causes people either to hesitate to act or to default to doing what makes sense to them, based on their perception of their situation. This perception may be limited by their perspective, resulting in action that might not be within the intent or priorities of the leader.

End State and Objectives

Wildland firefighters work in a dynamic, high-risk environment with limited resources available to achieve results. Leaders cannot afford tactical action that does not directly support the accomplishment of the critical objectives required to attain the desired end state.

Freelancing may veer activities from the most important objectives and can be dangerous and unpredictable. Building line in the wrong location is a waste of resources and time. It exposes firefighters to unnecessary hazards and increases fatigue. Once resources are deployed in support of secondary or minor objectives, it is that much more difficult to reposition and start over. Conflicts over the priorities of who gets what resource cause friction and a loss of efficiency in the team.

Extraneous actions and unhealthy conflict diffuse focus, affecting the situation awareness of the individuals involved and decreasing attention to subtle but important changes in the environment.

Success in this environment requires leaders to use a process that defines and communicates the end state and objectives in an efficient and concise manner, including very clear guidance about *what* a leader wants, but with only enough *how* to ensure a unity of effort and command.

Linear and Circular Process

Turning intent into meaningful action is both a linear and a circular process.

Initiating the linear process, the IMT establishes an end state and sets objectives to accomplish it. Team members develop a strategy that applies the SMART criteria to make sure that the objectives can be accomplished within the constraints of available time and resources. Operational leaders then select the appropriate tactics and implement the action needed. The process is sequential, with each step requiring the completion of the previous step.

The process becomes circular when leaders evaluate the results of the action and modify the plan at each level according to changes in the environment or the team.

Establish the End State

When a leader is confronted with an emergency event such as a wildland fire, the first strategic decision is the definition of the desired end state. To define the end state, compare the values at risk with the standing incident response priorities and then consider the management priorities for the area affected.

The following are the wildland fire service standing Incident Response Priorities:

- Life
- Property
- Natural Resources
- Containment
- Control

These priorities should indicate the most important elements of the end state. In addition, leaders take into account the principles of action and how they would influence an appropriate end state.

The end state describes what the situation looks like after success has been achieved.

The fire is suppressed and controlled within as small an area as possible. Petroglyphs in the Rattlesnake Potrero are protected. Fire is excluded from the Dead Meat Condor Sanctuary and the Santa Agatha Wilderness Area.

This description of success narrows focus to the mission and primes the pump to think and act appropriately. A well-defined end state contains the important priorities around which to start setting objectives.

Set the Objectives

Setting meaningful objectives requires consideration of a number of factors. Incident priorities reflect the relative importance of values at risk and guide the selection and prioritization of the objectives. They are not objectives in and of themselves.

To be meaningful, objectives also must meet the SMART criteria and be attainable with the resources available to the team.

Objectives should be written as action-oriented items, starting with verbs such as *protect, keep, prevent, exclude, stop, suppress, contain*, and so on.

Ideally, objectives include clear boundaries or timelines that are easy to identify and locate on a map. Complete objectives should contain enough information to convey their intent:

Keep the fire North of Sierra Madre Road to exclude fire from the Dead Meat Condor Sanctuary and the Santa Agatha Wilderness Area.

On smaller or less complex incidents, objectives can be short and simple:

Protect Petroglyphs in the Rattlesnake Potrero

Keep the fire West of Zorra Canyon

Keep fire South of Cumbre Road

Keep fire East of Mansajero Creek

Applying the Principles of Action enables a leader to balance the objectives against the constraints of time, people, and resources to create a practical and workable strategy.

A team rarely has everything they need to accomplish all objectives simultaneously. The team must refine the objectives into a priority of main effort and supporting efforts.

Develop the Strategy

The strategy should be understandable by all and clearly prioritize scarce resources. A clear and concise strategy greatly diminishes friction and conflict during the conduct of the operation.

The main effort should support the objective with the highest priority, and most of the resources should be directed to that effort.

The main effort will be indirect attack with a burnout to prevent the fire from crossing south over Sierra Madre ridge into the Wilderness and Condor Sanctuary. All available air and bull dozer assets will support this operation when necessary.

The supporting efforts have the following priority:

1. Cultural resource protection preparation in and around the petroglyph campground. Dozers will be released to this effort once indirect line for main effort is completed.

2. Direct attack along fires edge in the Southwest portion of the fire in the Blanco and Leon Canyon drainages. Second priority for air support when available.
3. Defend and hold the road from Caballo Potrero to Sierra Madre Ridge on the Southeast portion of the fire. Prepare for firing as resources become available.

Select the Tactics

Once the end state, objectives, and strategy are clearly defined by the leadership team, the tactical planning should be delegated to the lowest level possible. This kind of decentralized planning allows tactical leaders maximum flexibility, increases commitment to the plan, and avoids unduly constraining or limiting decision making.

The tactical leader takes the end state, the objectives that pertain to their team or teams, and the overall strategy and goes through the same process of establishing their own end state for that operational period, setting tactical objectives and coordinating with the appropriate team members and adjacent units.

Adjust the Strategy

Once the end state, objectives, strategy, and tactics are established and communicated and start to be acted upon, the circular aspect of turning intent into action begins.

As the situation unfolds and leaders receive feedback on progress, leaders at every level evaluate the results of the action and initiate modifications to the plan.

The main effort may shift, and some of the previously supporting efforts may now become the main effort. If a major new development occurs or an incident within the incident evolves, even the incident objectives and the end state may change.

At every level, leaders must monitor events within the context of the desired end state, communicating developments that may require modifications to any component of the plan.

Summary

- To avoid creating confusion among subordinates and maintain situation awareness over the entire incident, commanders focus on developing strategy rather than worrying about tactical problems and decisions.
- Commander's guidance starts with the leader understanding the intent of the leader above him or her. This understanding comes from analyzing written and verbal guidance about incident objectives and priorities, asking questions, and seeking clarification.
- To successfully manage an incident, an incident commander translates the incident objectives into achievable goals and objectives that the resources on scene can accomplish.
- Good leader's intent breaks an assignment into three parts, clearly describing the task, purpose, and end state.
- Turning intent into meaningful action is both a linear and a circular process. The process becomes circular when leaders evaluate the results of the action and modify the plan at each level according to changes in the environment or the team.
- When a leader is confronted with an emergency event, such as a wildland fire, the first strategic decision is the definition of the desired end state.

Span of Control

In general, commanding a large number is like commanding a few. It is a question of dividing up the numbers. Fighting with a large number is like fighting with a few. It is a question of configuration and designation.

- Sun Tzu

The Art of War, 500 B.C.

A leader's situation awareness must encompass clear perception about the environment. In addition, the leader must understand the impact of adding people and resources to an incident and recognize when supervising too many people affects ability to lead.

Factors Affecting Span of Control

As a management concept, span of control refers to a leader's ability to manage a number of relationships. As subordinates are added, the number of relationships a leader must maintain and manage increases exponentially.

These relationships fall into three categories:

- Direct relationships between the leader and subordinates
- Relationships between individual subordinates
- Group relationships between the leader and combinations of subordinates

The addition of these relationships places a large demand on the leader's attention. At a certain point, the benefit of adding more subordinates becomes questionable in face of the cost of doing so.

With four subordinates, a leader must deal with 44 relationships. When a fifth subordinate is added, the number of relationships increases to 100.

That's a 127% increase in complexity of what the leader manages in exchange for a mere 20% increase in the work capacity of the team. Eventually the demand of these relationships exceeds the

leader's supply of time and attention, and span of control is breached.

Many other factors affect a leader's ability to maintain an appropriate span of control while managing an incident.

- Experience of team members
- Complexity of task
- Coordination requirements
- Stakes
- Risk
- Cost of failure
- Leader's taskings

A special note about the leader's taskings: when engaged in other tasks requiring time and attention—flying a helicopter, operating a computer, extricating someone from an accident—the leader's ability to handle a broad span of control may be severely compromised. The leader needs to guard against temptations to be a doer because of the implications it has for span of control.

The following examples illustrate how specific factors affect span of control:

- If everyone has the same level of experience, the same assigned task, and few coordination requirements (for example, a classroom), the span of control could be as broad as 30 or more.
- If the task is complex and requires significant coordination, and if success is achieved only if every team member performs their assigned function (for example, a football team), the span of control narrows to between 5 and 12.
- If the task is complex and requires significant coordination and, in addition, the stakes are high and the risk is great (for example, firefighters), the span of control quickly drops to between 3 and 7.
- If the task is very complex, risk is exceedingly great, the cost of failure very high, and the margin of error thin (for example, flight training or explosive ordnance disposal), the span of control might be one.

Exceeding Span of Control

Exceeding span of control produces unintended effects. One common consequence is an increase in the leader's and team members' stress.

An increase in stress levels typically causes stress reactions—physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral. Stress reactions put operations at risk by shifting the leader's perspective from proactive to reactive.

Further, when a leader exhibits stress reactions, team members keenly feel the effects. They may need direction but receive none or get unrealistic guidance. Not getting what they need, in turn, triggers stress among team members. The whole situation can set pre-conditions for error and can damage team cohesion.

Maintaining Awareness of Span of Control

Exceeding span of control is a creeping issue; becoming saturated happens gradually. In the heat of managing a dynamic incident, a leader may not even be aware that the limits are being exceeded.

The best way to maintain situation awareness regarding span of control is to plan for it:

- **Determine the limit of span of control in the size-up.** Assess the likely limits of span of control and the factors that could impact span of control.
- **Set trigger points.** Establish trigger points to alert you to take action to maintain a reasonable span of control.
- **Brief trigger points.** Make the trigger points known to key people so they can alert you as the predetermined triggers approach.
- **Establish lookouts—internal and external.** Know yourself; be aware of personal markers that indicate that an effective span of control has been exceeded. Inform a peer of signs indicating problems with span of control. Make the peer a touchstone to help you maintain situation awareness.

Action taken to address span of control issues may be internal, requiring a simple reorganization, or external, requiring additional

support. Most importantly, leaders must maintain an awareness and be prepared to take action when span of control is exceeded.

Technology and Span of Control

Something I try to get across to our students is the myth of control... Adolph Hitler sat in a bunker with a radio, moved markers around on a map, issued orders and thought he was in control of the war, sometimes down to the battalion level. But that wasn't real. He wasn't in control.

- Dr. Christopher Gabel

Professor of History, Kansas State University and
US Army Command and General Staff College

Can technology broaden a commander's span of control?

On the positive side, computers and high-tech communications can greatly enhance a leader's ability to be effective.

Technology offers a leader access to real time information unfiltered by successive levels of the chain of command. As technology on the scene increases, leaders can see what the frontline crew sees.

The additional technology allows the commander to be better informed. As a result, the commander has an elevated situation awareness and is in a position to make better decisions.

On the down side, technology may trigger the temptation to directly supervise the crew on the frontline. Although undiluted information up the chain of command is desirable, direct supervision from IC to firefighter is not.

In all but the smallest and simplest organizations, the leader at the top cannot give each individual the personal attention required and deserved. Leaders must therefore maintain a reasonable span of control, establish intermediate levels of leadership each with its own span of control, and ensure each level of leadership takes care of team members on the corresponding level.

In addition, people can come to rely on the technology to the point where a failure in the technology paralyzes them. Technology is just one set of tools in the leader's toolbox, and leader's must keep a reasonable perspective about cost of using and the value added by this tool.

Summary

- A leader's situation awareness must encompass not only a clear perception of the environment, but also an understanding of the effects of adding people and resources to an incident.
- As a management concept, span of control refers to a leader's ability to manage a number of relationships. As subordinates are added, the number of relationships a leader must maintain and manage increases exponentially.
- Exceeding span of control produces unintended effects. One common consequence is an increase in the leader's and team members' stress.
- Exceeding span of control is a creeping issue; becoming saturated happens gradually. In the heat of managing a dynamic incident, a leader may not even be aware that the limits are being exceeded.
- Action taken to address span-of-control issues may be internal, requiring a simple reorganization, or external, requiring additional support.
- Computers and high-tech communications can greatly enhance a leader's ability to be effective, but technology is just one set of tools in the leader's toolbox, and leader's must keep a reasonable perspective about costs and benefits of using these tools.

Team Effectiveness

A secret goal cannot benefit from the participation and force of others. A well-defined goal, shared with others and sparked with enthusiasm, will draw energy and forces that cannot be measured or suppressed.

- James E. Buerger
publisher

For many leaders, the incident leadership challenge is having to deal with a time-sensitive crisis with a team of strangers. The incident waits for no one, and the leader must be able to form an effective team faster than the incident gets out of control.

Team Building Phases

Team building is a predictable process. A team's evolution from a group of individuals to a cohesive team goes through predictable phases. A leader who understands the process and the desired outcome of team building can greatly expedite the process.

The three phases of team building are formation, development, and sustainment.

All teams—long-standing or short-lived—go through these predictable phases. Leaders who recognize team members' progress can better facilitate the process and enable a team to mature quickly, achieving greater synergy and cohesion.

Communication is the foundation of the team building process: *Communications builds trust, and trust builds cohesion.*

The Formation Phase

The formation phase begins when a group of strangers come together with the expectation that they will become a team. This phase is characterized by a lack of situation awareness: team members do not know each other or their leader; they do not know what to expect.

Roles and responsibilities may be undefined. Standard policies and operating procedures may be unclear. Communication norms and acceptable methods of dealing with conflict may not be spelled out. Anxiety about the unknown is high.

For the most part, people are simply trying to make sense of their environment and the new people in it.

It is important to recognize that when a new person or group joins a team, they are in the formation phase regardless of the development of the rest of the team. Newcomers may significantly impact team cohesion unless they are brought through this phase as rapidly as possible.

The leader's primary responsibility in this phase is to turn the unknown into the known as quickly as possible, thereby reducing the level of anxiety within the team. This requires communication—and lots of it.

The Development Phase

The development phase begins when anxieties have been reduced. It is characterized by initiative, meaningful feedback, and conflict.

Team members are ready, willing, and able to get to work. Information moves through the team quickly and efficiently.

Team members may not yet feel a collective ownership of the team's effort. They often straddle between individual and team identity. As a result, conflicts may erupt as individuals try to better define roles and responsibilities, jostle for position, and bump into each other while trying to achieve their perception of the common goal.

In the development phase, teams begin to test what was communicated to them in the formation phase. They measure word against action. The more closely the match, the greater the trust.

During the development phase, the leader should focus on providing the mechanisms and environment for trust to develop. As a first step, maintain consistency—enforce agreed-upon policies, follow standards, reinforce intent, and practice open communication. Demonstrate trust in the group's outputs and products. Practice what you preach.

The Sustainment Phase

The sustainment phase begins when team member's sense of identity shifts from individuals to the team. It is characterized by creativity, adaptability, and precision. The team has become highly focused and effective.

The communication and trust built in the previous phases now is focused and brought to bear on the team's mission with precision. Team members demonstrate a willingness to support each other in achieving a common goal. They know how to back each other up and are willing to step up to the task.

Errors and problems are detected early, and when found, the team corrects them quickly. They see themselves as part of something larger than themselves. Situation awareness about the team, team members, the leaders, and the mission is high. The team, rather than individuals, accomplishes tasks.

A leader's biggest challenge during the Sustainment Phase is to avoid complacency and to persistently find ways to improve processes. A cohesive team does not stay that way by itself, so to prevent the team from losing ground, it must continuously improve.

Make sure that all the groundwork laid in the Formation Phase and the Development Phase remains intact. Communication and trust must be maintained to sustain a cohesive team.

Anatomy of an Effective Team

Effective teams, those that have successfully gone through the initial phases of team building, have similar characteristics.

In *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*,¹ Patrick Lencioni identifies why many teams fail and what it takes for a team to climb to a level of high performance and achieve synergy.

This pyramid illustrates the building blocks of effective teams.

1 Patrick Lencioni. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. Jossey-Bass, 2002.



Each level builds on the foundation below. When one level of the pyramid is dysfunctional, the synergy of the team erodes, and it is almost impossible for the team to be effective at higher levels.

Rapid Team Building

The leader plays a leading role in building and supporting an effective team. He or she has a responsibility to create an environment in which teams can establish a foundation of trust and build on it with healthy conflict, commitment, and peer accountability to achieve the team result.

Trust

Trust is the foundation of effective teams. Without trust, it is unlikely that a group of individuals can become an effective team.

Think of trust as predictability. The amount of confidence you have in predicting another's behavior is a measure of how much you trust that person. Trust increases when team members can predict their environment with accuracy and when people and systems behave in predictable ways.

For incident leaders, here's the rub: although trust is the cornerstone of an effective team, building trust takes time, and time is a scarce commodity during an emergency response incident.

A solution: using doctrinal process.

Relying on familiar doctrinal process takes advantage of time already invested. Because of a responder's familiarity with the

ICS, the leader can build trust by tapping into people's trust in this system.

Leaders can use doctrinal processes to their advantage. Review, clarify, and emphasize the standard procedures needed now; minimize deviations from the accepted norm.

Healthy Conflict

Overcoming obstacles requires innovation and creativity. Creating an environment that permits free flowing ideas gives a team a better shot at solving problems.

Healthy conflict is the source of good ideas. Tapping into everyone's opinion, expertise, and perspective provides the raw material for the team's original thinking and problem solving.

Trust promotes healthy conflict. Team members are willing to engage in constructive debate when they know leaders listen to them and take them seriously. With a foundation of trust, team members know they will not be penalized for speaking up.

Healthy conflict requires a focus on the *what* not the *who*. By eliminating the *who* from discussions, team members can resolve issues more quickly and completely without collateral damage. By accentuating the *what*, leaders mine a deposit of good ideas and avoid the blame game.

Leaders enable healthy conflict to occur by providing clear intent—a clear target for the team. It allows the team to spend their time focusing on how to get there versus people's interpretations of what and where the target is.

Commitment

Team members develop ownership in decisions when they have a say and know they helped shape the outcome. Even if their suggestion was rejected, people can and will commit to the team's decision if they have been heard.

Most reasonable people don't have to have their way in a discussion. They just need to be heard and know their input was duly considered.

To build commitment within the team, seek input and delegate as much as you can as soon as you can.

Get team members involved from the start. Actively solicit contributions— not just strong backs but also ideas and perspective. Delegate—make people responsible, give them enough authority to accomplish their assignment, and hold them accountable. Delegation always involves risk, but the ownership that is built far outweighs any danger.

Involvement equals commitment.

Peer Accountability

Peer accountability is the certain knowledge that all team members, as individuals and collectively, are responsible for their actions. Performance—whether good or bad—is seen and judged. Actions have consequences—both good and bad.

Members of highly effective teams improve performance by holding one another accountable. They demonstrate respect for each other and have high expectations for other's contributions.

More than any system of reward and discipline, more than any policy, the fear of letting down respected team mates motivates people to improve their performance.

Individuals' ability to succeed is intertwined and dependent on their team mates' ability to succeed. By allowing the team to serve as the primary accountability mechanism, the leader reduces administrative and performance supervision. In essence, the team disciplines itself.

To facilitate peer accountability, develop and practice an open system of tracking and reporting. Show how each team mate mutually supports the other; communicate commitments and timelines with other team members.

Just as the leader needs to be informed about progress and team performance, each member of the team needs to be aware of other team member's intended actions and commitments.

Tracking and reporting in an open forum is crucial to peer accountability. Peer accountability works only if peers understand the expectations placed on other team members.

Keep this requirement in mind as you develop the connectivity plan. Create the structure and environment that supports an open system.

Team Results

Only team results count.

This idea is best illustrated with an example:

Say Division C's supervisor hoards engines, handcrews, and helicopters to make sure that the fire doesn't rip through Division C. However, as a result, Division B is stretched so thin that the fire squeezes through a gap in the line.

Division C does not win. The fire moves beyond the team's goal. The team loses. Everyone loses.

The collective ego must be larger than the individual's ego. The desired team results must be so clear that no one would consider doing something to enhance his or her ego at the expense of the team's ability to achieve the collective goal.

To provide the appropriate perspective, narrow the focus. Give the team a clear end state and set objectives that directly support the end state.

Firefighters do not have enough time or energy to go after every goal that they judge is important. Nor can they simultaneously go after multiple goals without splintering the effort and splitting the team.

Establish clear, SMART goals and objectives. Keep the focus on achieving the desired end state.

Causes of Team Dysfunction

There is no guarantee that a cohesive team will remain cohesive. In fact, all relationships, if left unattended, tend to revert to a dysfunctional state. Human nature dictates that any team, without constant and concerted effort by the leaders, can decay into dysfunction.

The following are some causes of team dysfunction:

- Unpredictable or inappropriate leadership styles
- Values that conflict with job expectations
- Conflicting expectations and policy
- Lack of clear objectives
- Role ambiguity or conflict

- Perception of lack of support
- Perception of no control
- Poorly coordinated team size, structure, or work load

Note that many of the causes outside of your control are still within your sphere of influence.

Indicators of Team Dysfunction

All teams have some elements of dysfunction. The struggle to balance the scale between cohesion and chaos is never-ending and fluctuates constantly. The leader's challenge is to keep the scales weighted on the functional side.

Unfortunately, the tendency to move toward dysfunction is natural, so team building becomes a continuous uphill battle—just to maintain consistency.

These are team building watchouts—signs of team dysfunction and trigger points indicating a need for the leaders to take action:

Absence of Trust

The following are indicators of this dysfunction:

- Negligence in practising the five communication responsibilities
- Unwillingness to balance strength and weaknesses; failure to recognize and tap other's skills and experiences
- Intolerance of mistakes
- Avoidance of peers

Fear of Conflict

The following are indicators of this dysfunction:

- Reluctance to voice disparate opinions—silent disagreement
- Artificial sense of harmony
- Avoidance of controversial topics
- System workarounds

- Form over function—undue attention to processes that do not yield results

Lack of Commitment

The following are indicators of this dysfunction:

- Ambiguity of organizational purpose
- Analysis paralysis
- Second guessing out of earshot
- Compartmentalization and disengagement

Avoidance of Peer Accountability

The following are indicators of this dysfunction:

- Unwillingness to hold peers and upward leadership accountable
- Tension and resentment over missed deadlines or others' failure to follow through
- Acceptance of mediocrity rather than agreed-upon standards
- Increased bureaucracy to compensate for lack of peer accountability

Inattention to Team Results

The following are indicators of this dysfunction:

- Inattention to the collective goals of the group
- Individual focus—concern about individual achievements rather than team success
- Stagnation and failure to grow
- Maligned systems and goals—what the system rewards is not aligned with stated goals
- Over-reaction to outside criticism
- Short-sighted planning and decision making—tendency to shift with the wind

Summary

- The incident waits for no one, and the leader must be able to form an effective team with whomever is on scene faster than the incident gets out of control.
- A team's evolution from a group of individuals to a cohesive team goes through predictable phases. A leader who understands the process and the desired outcome of team building can greatly expedite the process.
- The leader's primary responsibility during the formation phase is to turn the *unknown* into the *known* as quickly as possible, which requires communication—and lots of it.
- During the development phase, the leader focused on providing the mechanisms and environment for trust to develop. Demonstrate trust in the group's outputs and products. Practice what you preach.
- A leader's biggest challenge during the Sustainment Phase is to avoid complacency and to persistently find ways to improve processes.
- Leaders have a responsibility to create environments in which their teams can establish a foundation of trust. Healthy conflict requires a focus on the *what* not the *who*.
- The tendency to move towards dysfunction is natural, so team building becomes a continuous uphill struggle.

Operational Tempo

The essence of emergency operations is a clash between the human will and the environment.

- David Festerling, Deputy Chief

Ventura County Fire Department

Operational tempo is the speed and intensity of your organization's actions relative to the speed and intensity of unfolding events in the operational environment. It is based in the concept that incident management is a competitive conflict between responders and the destructive forces of the operational environment. The objective of managing operational tempo is to plan, prepare, and execute operations proactively, rather than continuously being forced to react to the environment.

Managing operational tempo effectively provides a significant competitive advantage. A team that manages it effectively is far more likely to achieve relative superiority sooner—and recover from setbacks faster—than a team that stays in a reactionary mode.

The Fog of War

War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty.

- Carl Von Clausewitz

On War 1831

A great strategist, Carl Von Clausewitz understood in the early 1800s that the fundamental elements of friction, danger, and uncertainty combined to create the chaos he described as the *Fog of War*.

He viewed these elements as inherent in the high-risk environment. They could be mitigated but not eliminated. Their presence created significant barriers to accurate situation awareness, sound decision-making, effective command and control, and the certainty of outcomes. Experience has demonstrated that the Fog of War is a

legitimate force that leaders must contend with if they are to achieve success.

The prospects for eliminating friction appear quite dim, because friction gives every evidence of being a built-in or structural feature of combat processes.

- Barry D. Watts

Author, Clausewitzian Friction and Future War

A force internal to the team, friction is created by many factors:

- Human factors caused by the limits of physical and cognitive abilities— inaccurate situation awareness, physical and mental stress, conflict, miscommunication, misunderstanding, and faulty assumptions.
- Limitations of machines and technology resulting in mechanical breakdowns, mismatch of capabilities, poor communications, or the reverse problem of information overload.

Friction causes a loss of efficiency and an increase of errors, miscues, and *things falling through the cracks*. In a high-risk environment, these miscues can have catastrophic consequences. Although some friction is inevitable, too much friction can lead to a situation in which the team lacks the capacity to react effectively and take advantage of opportunities.

As soon as there is life, there is danger.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

American essayist, poet, and philosopher

In high-risk environments, people are pitted against the destructive forces of nature or mankind in an effort to bring order to chaos. These destructive forces have the ability to unleash tremendous amounts of lethal energy. A firefighter can act reasonably and responsibly and still be harmed or killed in the line of duty.

Incident leaders can also be faced with profound moral decisions that affect their people's and the public's safety, livelihoods, and professional careers. Incident management requires both physical and moral courage from leaders. The stress of these conditions affect the situation awareness and decision making of people at all levels, from commander to first responder.

Uncertainty is the only certainty there is, and knowing how to live with insecurity is the only security.

- John Allen Paulos

Mathematician, lecturer, and author

Unpredictable and unknown elements bring uncertainty to complex operational environments. Uncountable variables interact with one another in random ways. Stress and uncertainty affect people's judgment. Leaders have an imperfect understanding of human behavior. All these elements dramatically increase uncertainty during emergency response incidents.

And uncertainty makes people uncomfortable. Uncertainty creates doubt, which leads to fear, anxiety, and mistrust. All of these degrade people's ability to make effective decisions and work well as teams.

Uncertainty can trigger indecisiveness, which all too often results in a missed window of opportunity. It is a fine line between getting enough situation awareness to act prudently and indiscriminately avoiding risk, which inevitably leads to lost opportunity.

Operational Tempo Awareness

Operations are most vulnerable to accidents and error when in transition. Maintaining good situation awareness at the start of and throughout transitions represents a considerable challenge to maintaining effective operational tempo.

Change is the definitive characteristic of transition:

- **Environment is changing**—changes such as operations style, leadership style, weather, fire behavior, size of fire, time of day, physical conditions of firefighters, condition or availability of equipment, or values at risk.
- **Response is changing (reactive)**—tactical redirection resulting from indirect to direct line, from ground to air attack, from more to fewer resources, from more-experienced to less-experienced resources, from holding line to protecting structures.
- **Initiating change by anticipating the future environment (proactive)**—planned redirection based on projections of the future. A proactive response depends on maintaining good situation awareness and anticipating change.

Levels of Engagement

Disengagement is not a level of engagement.

- Not-so-famous MCS strategist

The acronym DRAW-D was developed by the Marine Corps as a tool to understand the spectrum of engagement with an opponent. In wildland fire, the opponent is the destructive force of the fire or all-hazard incident. The DRAW-D acronym is spelled out as follows:

- Defend
- Reinforce
- Advance
- Withdraw
- Delay

Each level of engagement is based on the relative energy states, or *combat power* as it is known in the military, of the opposing forces. It is defined as the total means of force a team can bring to bear on an opponent at a given time.

When the environment is unleashing overwhelming energy, such as during a blowup, conditions are far too dangerous and withdrawing is appropriate.

When resources are at a relative disadvantage, delaying tactics are used to reposition resources at a more advantageous location, or to slow the loss of previous gains.

When the energy states are equal, defense is used to protect previous gains, slow the advance of the fire, and wait for an opportunity to regain the initiative and go on the offense.

When resources have the advantage, the environment has provided an opportunity to achieve relative superiority. Resources advance to achieve containment and control over the incident.

When the environment changes to a low energy state, as are the conditions of a wildfire at night, conditions are favorable to reinforce currently engaged resources and make considerable progress. The environment is least dangerous at this time, so it is desirable to build on and exploit previous successes to take advantage of a significant opportunity.

Speed and Intensity

A half-assed plan well executed is better than the perfect plan that never gets executed.

- Old Army maxim

On the plains of hesitation lie the blackened bones of countless millions who at the dawn of victory lay down to rest and, in resting, died.

- Anonymous

Successfully maintaining operational tempo isn't solely about speeding up to match or exceed the pace of the environment. It is also about knowing when operations should slow down and why.

A leader must balance activities such as planning, preparation, and action. Too much time spent planning creates missed opportunities. Too little time spent planning results in high potential for error. The leader needs to constantly assess when to pull back to regroup and when to move ahead.

The leader's assessment must encompass the capabilities and endurance of the resources as well as potential risk versus gain.

Using too few resources keeps the team from building the needed momentum to gain the advantage. Tasking resources beyond their capabilities leaves the team exhausted and unable to respond to an unexpected change in the environment.

The foundation for successfully managing operational tempo is ongoing situation awareness—of the team's capability, the changing environment, and transitions.

Principles of Action

The Principles of Action are timeless principles that guide action in a mission-oriented environment where competitive advantage, or relative superiority, is a decisive factor.

The principles serve as anchor points that shape the thinking and decision making of leaders in an environment dominated by the fog of war. This framework ensures that, even in a decentralized command system, everyone shares a common set of values and doctrine.

- **Objective**—all action should be directed toward the accomplishment of clearly defined results that directly support the senior leader's intent.
- **Unity of Command**—all forces operate under one responsible commander who has the authority to direct action to achieve a common end state.
- **Offense**—acting with initiative in order to achieve a decisive result by being proactive.
- **Safety**—accomplishing the mission while acting aggressively to minimize the potential impact of hazards and risks.
- **Focus**—the concentration of appropriate power at the decisive point to achieve maximum effect.
- **Speed**—moving quickly enough to take advantage of opportunities that yield decisive results.
- **Positioning**—the movement, placement, and sustainment of resources to be able to be available at the decisive point and time.
- **Reserves**—maintaining a pool of resources to sustain momentum or to reinforce engaged resources to exploit an opportunity.
- **Simplicity**—clear, uncomplicated, and concise plans and orders stand the greatest chance of success under chaotic conditions.

Contingency Planning

No plan survives the first contact with the enemy,
- Field Marshal Helmuth Graf von Moltke 1800-1891

Life is what happens when you've made other plans. This saying reflects the fact that things just don't always go according to plan.

The inherent elements of friction, danger, and uncertainty along with the innumerable variables in a complex, high-risk environment mean that plans are built on perceptions that by the time they are implemented may be outdated or inaccurate.

Planning contingencies for all potential variables and outcomes is impossible. Conversely, failing to plan any contingencies is a leadership failure, given the certainty of the unexpected.

Because time for planning is always limited, focus on planning contingencies for *mission-stoppers*, the critical components that are essential to the success of the operation. The principles of action provide guidance for visualizing the most important areas that should take priority in contingency planning.

PACE is a military acronym for planning back-up communications networks. However, it is widely used as an effective tool to guide a leader through prioritizing areas likely to have the most impact on mission-critical operations.

- Primary
- Alternate
- Contingency
- Emergency

Trigger Points

A trigger point is a pre-planned event or time that initiates a pre-determined response. Trigger points are planning tools used to mitigate known risks, identify emerging risks, or synchronize operations after a plan has been implemented.

Trigger points are identified during the stage of planning when planners discuss the *what ifs* and contingencies. All successful leaders, at all levels of an incident, establish trigger points.

The following are some examples of good uses of trigger points:

- **Mitigate known risk.**

OK, we know that front is moving in at about 1600 today. If we haven't tied that line in to Division C by 1500, I want you to start moving your people back over to the safety zone we saw at lunch. Call me no later than 1430 to let me know what's happening.

- **Identify emerging risk.**

We don't really know what's going to happen when the fire crosses the bottom of this draw, so if it hooks left and runs up the other side to that scree, we're OK. But if it burns around to the right and makes it around the ridge, we've got problems. If it makes it around the ridge, pull everyone back around to our side so they aren't below it. Call me right away so I can call operations and bring some air in.

- **Synchronize operations.**

We will know at 1300 whether we get these tankers at 1500. Obviously our tactics depend on whether we get them. Let's make sure all our crews have eaten before 1300 because, if we get the air, we're going to push as hard as we can to tie this line in and get down to camp tonight. If we don't get the air, we're going to keep going until we run out of saw fuel tonight, spike up top, and be down here back at it by 0730. Brief your crews and plan accordingly.

In implementing contingency plans, keep the following in mind:

- **Sense likely change areas**—Keep a high-level perspective to anticipate where changes are likely to occur.
- **Establish trigger points**—A component of good planning, trigger points enable the leader and team members to anticipate events and control the tempo of operations.
- **Create contingencies**—Develop courses of action for circumstances in which the original plan becomes impractical or not feasible. Make sure team members know the details about the contingency plans and understand how to implement them.
- **Brief and back-brief transition plans**—Decrease the chances of someone not getting the word. Include briefings and back-briefings in standard operating procedures.
- **Delegate transition authority**—After providing clear leader's intent and trigger points, give others the authority to make transitions when the conditions call for it. Giving others this authority gives them the ability to act when the time is right and increases the chances of smooth transitions.
- **Brief when transition occurs**—Make sure that everyone involved understands that a transition is taking place. Keep situation awareness high.
- **Require acknowledgement**—Make sure that the responsibility of understanding and acknowledging messages remains in focus during transitions.

Summary

- Operational tempo is the speed and intensity of your organization's actions relative to the speed and intensity of unfolding events in the operational environment.

- The fog of war—friction, danger, and uncertainty—can be mitigated, but not eliminated.
- Operations are most vulnerable to accidents and error when in transition. Maintaining good situation awareness at the start of and throughout transitions represents a considerable challenge to maintaining effective operational tempo.
- Defend, reinforce, advance, withdraw, and delay (DRAW-D) are the levels of engagement. Each level is based on the relative energy states of the opposing forces at a given time.
- Too much time spent planning and preparing creates missed opportunities. Too little time spent planning results in high potential for error.
- The Principles of Action are anchor points that shape the thinking and decision making of leaders in an environment dominated by the fog of war.
- Because time for planning is always limited, focus on planning contingencies for *mission-stoppers*, the critical components that are essential to the success of the operation.
- All successful leaders, at all levels of an incident, establish trigger points to mitigate known risks, identify emerging risks, or synchronize operations after a plan has been implemented.

Command and Control

The first element of command and control is people—people who gather information, make decisions, take action, communicate and cooperate with one another in the accomplishment of a common goal.

- David Festerling

Ventura County Deputy Fire Chief in Command and Control

A commander's effectiveness depends on how well the leader can implement effective communications within the organization, and effective communications is at the heart of Command and Control.

The Nature of Command and Control

Command consists of the leader making decisions, communicating those decisions, and directing people to action. Effective command cascades down through an organization, providing clear intent, guidance, and direction to everyone on the incident.

Command embodies the *Auftragstaktik* concept of empowerment by providing the context of leader's intent and giving subordinates the flexibility to exercise initiative.

Control consists of feedback to the leader regarding how the situation is unfolding and the results of action. Control flows upward: from the firefighters on the line through the crew leaders, division, and group supervisors through the staff back to the commander. Control enables a commander to modify the command decisions and direction as the evolving situation requires.

Command and Control Process

The essence of emergency operations is a clash between the human will and the environment and any concept of command and control must recognize this first.

- David Festerling

Ventura County Deputy Fire Chief in Command and Control

Command and control is a constant reciprocal exchange working in two directions. The emphasis is on the requirement and effectiveness of two-way communications.

The overall goal is to have a complimentary flow of communication that enables all leaders on an incident to adapt to changing circumstances and make sound decisions. Command and control becomes the framework for assuring effective two-way communication during an incident.

Command and control requires the leader to provide intent and direction and then empower subordinates to demonstrate flexibility and initiative in a changing environment.

Those subordinates are free to take appropriate action but are expected to communicate status and changing conditions quickly when the situation requires.

The situation provides an illustration for the Power Paradox. Empowering subordinates directly results in receiving control from subordinates.

This view describes a constant process in which the leader and subordinates have reciprocal responsibilities. The ultimate goal of command and control is to reduce risk, enable the incident leadership to remain proactive, and produce success in effectively managing an incident.

Summary

- *Command* consists of the leader making decisions, communicating those decisions, and directing people to action. It provides the context of leader's intent and encourages subordinates to exercise initiative.
- *Control* flows upward: from the firefighters on the line through the crew leaders, division, and group supervisors through the

staff back to the commander. Control enables a commander to modify the command decisions and direction as the evolving situation requires.

- The overall goal is to have a complimentary flow of communication that enables all leaders on an incident to adapt to changing circumstances and make sound decisions.

Final Thoughts

As your career progresses, you will find yourself leading and directing people and crews in more and more complex incidents. You may move from being a leader of leaders to a leader of organizations. Each one of these steps takes you further and further from the frontline environment and into the leadership environment.

Although leadership and incident response share the same ground on some days, they are both unique and demanding environments unto themselves. It is important to realize that the skills that make a good responder and a good leader are different. As an incident leader, you, in essence, pursue two careers at the same time. You need to be both a tactician and a practitioner of the art of people.

Our society and government look to leaders at your level to make sure that missions succeed, resources are properly managed, and people are lead responsibly and safely.

Incident leaders represent a powerful public image and moral force. Our country sees emergency responders and their leaders as the embodiment of what is best about our nation. The leaders are the face of the wildland fire agencies and community and the embodiment of the firefighter ethic.

While in the role of incident leader, your decisions tremendously affect all walks of life in our society. How you develop yourself and improve your skills as a leader may be the deciding factor in whether a neighborhood is saved or a crew survives a close call. With so much at stake, you need to be able to look at your development as a leader and know that you have given it your best effort.