SAR *Technology Inc.*
http://sartechnology.ca
sartechnology@telus.net

'Incident Commander Pro' - Tips for Rapid Responder Deployments

Managing the response to an incident requires a fast and effective field response.

Responders expect to be quickly signed-in, promptly briefed and then rapidly deployed. They can become impatient -and then vocal - if they perceive administrative delays that appear to be slowing down their field deployment.

'Incident Commander Pro' is widely acknowledged to be a very fast and efficient tool for managing and deploying responders, with many features specifically designed for this purpose. In fact over 1,200 convergent volunteers a day have been signed-in, briefed and rapidly deployed using 'Incident Commander Pro'.

To make full use of the speed and efficiency of 'Incident Commander Pro' there are number of techniques that can be used to speed up the 'traffic flow' of managing large numbers of personnel and quickly deploying them to their assignments. The following procedures have been field-proven over time and found to be very effective at delivering a fast and efficient deployment of field responders.

Pre-Planning

It is strongly recommended, whenever possible, to pre-load 'Incident Commander Pro' with as much information as is available. Probably the most important single item to enter is the Personnel data, prior to its being used later for personnel check-in. Personnel data can be entered manually but the powerful Import routine will very rapidly import an entire Excel spreadsheet in a matter of seconds. A pre-formatted Excel spreadsheet is available into which your own personnel data can then be appended, ready for immediate importing.

Once the personnel data has been entered or imported arriving personnel can then be rapidly checked-in using the Check-In form, with the personnel data previously entered now being displayed in the check-In form's selection list.

An even faster way to Check-In personnel is to use the integrated Barcode System . Barcoded personnel ID cards, or a printed barcode list of personnel, can be instantly scanned into the Check-In form, with virtually no errors. This is the fastest and most accurate procedure for very rapidly checking-in personnel.

Paperwork Flow

Carefully managing the paperwork flow during the busy Check-In and task assignment stage of an incident can significantly improve the speed at which the responders are deployed. The following procedure has been found to create an efficient deployment with the minimum amount of delay.

Check-In Procedure

Print a list of paper sign-in sheets with the personnel names already listed. Blank sign-in sheets can also be printed for spontaneous volunteers or other personnel not already pre-loaded into 'Incident Commander Pro'.

As personnel arrive they sign the paper sign-in sheets and then begin preparing for their field assignments. As the sign-in lists become filled photocopies of the lists are taken to the computer where the Check-In form is displayed. As each signed name is selected from software's Check-In form's personnel list, that person is both checked-in on the software and a small checkmark placed beside their name on the sign-in photocopy. This makes it clear that each person has been fully checked-in – while the original paper sign-in form is still being used by other arriving personnel. This procedure ensures that arriving personnel are not delayed in any way, without queuing or waiting to be checked-in.

Task Assignments

Whenever possible task assignments should be created and printed before the responders arrive. This may require a night-shift to enter the assignments, or a very early start by the planning team, with the goal of creating a printed list of task assignments prior to the arrival of the responders. These computer-generated task assignment forms generally include the task assignment information, but do not typically include specific personnel names, radio call-signs or cellphone numbers. It is good practice to print out all these task-only assignment forms prior to the responders arriving.

When the responders arrive each team leader is briefed on his/her printed task assignment. The team leader then takes the paper copy of the assignment form, briefs the other team members and then writes the names, radio call-signs and cellphone numbers of all the field-team members onto the paper assignment form. A photocopy of this hand-completed assignment form is then returned to the computer where this additional field-team member's names and contact information are later entered, usually in the quieter period after the deployments have occurred. In this way the responders are not delayed, as they do not have to wait for the assignment's software data-entry to be fully completed.

Communications Log

Historically communications logs have been handwritten, typically alternately between answering the microphone and then writing the dialogue onto the paper communications log. This can be slow and sometimes difficult to read, with the additional risk of making mistakes in manually writing the correct call-signs and their true time-stamps.

The 'Incident Commander Pro' communications log speeds up log entry and improves accuracy by automatically inserting the call-signs (from the assignment forms) and the dialogue time stamps. This rapidly generates legible, sortable logs that can be printed in a number of formats. Entering the dialogue field does require typing on the keyboard, which is typically done after the dialogue has been received. An even faster approach entails installing a push-to-talk footswitch for the microphone. This frees up both hands to type in the dialogue entry immediately it is received.

These field-proven tips will deliver faster responder deployments, while simultaneously improving personnel check-in, briefing, deployments and mission communications.
