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THE ROLE OF

HEALTHCARE FACILITY SECURITY TEAMS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & INCIDENT COMMAND

INTRODUCTION

During a natural or human-caused critical incident, hospitals are typically inundated with people. Victims needing care. Family members awaiting word about loved ones. First responders, on-call medical staff, city or government officials, and facility leadership. Media personnel. Curious citizens.

The scene is chaotic. It can also be further complicated by the use of non-traditional, makeshift care areas within the hospital — lobbies, hallways, conference rooms — to administer treatment to an influx of patients that may exceed facility bed capacity.

The pace of events and medical care surrounding critical incidents is staggering. Security professionals are tasked with managing every logistical aspect, from crowd control and patient care area accessibility to communication and reporting.

Incident command centers prove invaluable in the moment, but responsiveness is only part of the equation for successful outcomes. Proactively is essential. **The preparedness training and tools healthcare facility security professionals use to protect hospitals during both crisis and routine events can make impactful differences.**

HEALTHCARE FACILITY SECURITY TEAM

TRAINING AND READINESS

Safety policies and procedures vary between healthcare facilities, but the one constant for any Joint Commission-accredited hospital or critical access hospital is adherence to Emergency Management standards.

The new and revised standards (see sidebar, *The Joint Commission Adds and Updates Emergency Management Standards*) underscore the importance of security professionals' commitment to the core principles of emergency preparedness, being:

> "*a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in an effort to ensure effective coordination during incident response*"[1]

Of utmost importance is the ability for healthcare facility security teams to quickly and effectively respond to evolving, stressful situations. Critical incidents present many possible scenarios — fire, active shooter, hazmat, terrorist threat, natural catastrophe, and the like.

Knowing precisely what may need to be confronted as these situations play out may not be possible. However, having muscle memory built around how to respond to specific types of critical incidents is paramount for healthcare facility security teams.

DRILLS IMPROVE
TEAMWORK AND RESPONSE TIMES

Recurring practice drills are a top priority for healthcare facility security teams. Regulatory mandates require drills to occur at regular intervals, but it's not uncommon for security leads to incorporate more practice into their department training strategies.

Executing the steps and post-drill performance evaluation sharpen skills. Repetition also aligns knowledge and action with the four phases of healthcare emergency management[1,2]:

- **Preparedness:** Activities focused on improving a hospital's overall capacity and ability to manage an emergency

- **Response:** Activities that mobilize resources to control the incident and manage its negative effects on the hospital

- **Recovery:** Activities typically occurring in the immediate aftermath of an emergency to expedite the restoration of essential services and normal operations

- **Mitigation:** Activities aimed at preventing the cause and consequences of a critical incident, or reducing the severity of its impact

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PRE-PLANNING

FOR SCHEDULED SPECIAL EVENTS

As recent national and international tragedies sadly illustrate, the potential for violence at large scale gatherings has drastically increased. Should unrest or targeted actions escalate a special event to a mass casualty incident, hospitals need to do more than brace for the inevitable impact.

Security professionals are viewing pre-planning emergency responses relative to scheduled special events as another layer of preparedness. Of course the hope is that the plan never has to be implemented. Should the need arise, however, knowing exactly how the facility will respond streamlines efficiencies and could well save lives.

THE JOINT COMMISSION ADDS AND UPDATES EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

July 1, 2022, marked the Joint Commission's implementation of new and revised standards detailing how hospitals and critical access hospitals develop and execute emergency management programs.[3]

The following non-exclusive list summarizes key focus areas within the standards:

▸ **An all-hazards approach — that is, being able to respond to any type of emergency because of the unpredictability of critical incidents[3]**

▸ **Facility leadership involvement and duties, including resource and asset management[3]**

▸ **Establishment of separate emergency operations, communications, staffing, and patient care plans[3]**

▸ **Advanced safety and security measures[3]**

The clear delineation of expectations and assignments within a hospital's Emergency Management Program shows how security teams are central to many aspects of the program.

OMNIGO'S DISPATCHblue EQUIPS HEALTHCARE FACILITY SECURITY TEAMS

FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

How well a healthcare facility security team performs its duties in the complex environment of a critical incident hinges on effective communication. Facts need to be accurate and conveyed to all stakeholders with the confidence that only proven end-to-end incident command software can instill in security professionals.

Omnigo's new DISPATCHblue provides a robust suite of tools that enhance situational awareness in healthcare settings. When healthcare facility security teams are called upon to mobilize, they can quickly:

- **Coordinate, monitor, and disseminate priority information**, including dispatch data

- **Create and share response plans and workflows** with surrounding public safety agencies

- **Add and update maps** that provide visual insights about emergency response operations

- **Capture and timestamp information** for post-incident reporting and documentation, and any required federal agency paperwork processing

- **Access cloud-based capabilities** including camera integration, facility floor plans and maps, and social media monitoring

- **Ensure seamless communication** with internal and external stakeholders during the incident

But DISPATCHblue isn't limited to emergency management. This powerful, configurable software helps security professionals streamline and simplify day-to-day operations by using cloud-based technology to:

- Relieve manual workloads

- Centralize all documentation and ICS forms

- Enable efficient communication and collaboration between departments, facilities, and stakeholders

- Increase dispatch efficiency and reduce response times by integrating automatic call location and displaying multiple maps

THE ALL-IN-ONE SOFTWARE SOLUTION FOR

ALL-HAZARDS INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

With or without notice, hospitals can become the central hub of care for victims of a critical incident. Skilled healthcare facility security teams must implement the facility's emergency management strategies while simultaneously responding to unpredictable and changing conditions to keep patients and the public safe.

In addition to their training, the tools security professionals rely on are instrumental in orchestrating an effective emergency response.

SOURCE

[1] The Joint Commission, Emergency Management | The Joint Commission, Undated
[2] SUNY Upstate Medical University, Four Phases of Emergency Management, Undated
[3] The Joint Commission, New and Revised Standards in Emergency Management, R3 Report, Issue 34, 2021

DISPATCHblue

Learn more about how DISPATCHblue can help you achieve desired outcomes during critical incidents and increase efficiency within day-to-day operations.

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