

Crisis Response Box

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In an emergency situation, first responders need immediate access to keys, maps, and emergency contact lists. Crisis managers within an organization also need fast access to information – and a crisis is not the right time to be gathering it. Responders cannot waste precious time to look for someone in charge, enter the facility, and then try to locate maps and access materials, such as combinations to locks, door keys and card keys.

After several incidents, school and law enforcement officials in dozens of states worked together to develop and publish guidelines for putting together a Crisis Response Box. But even as a recovery professional, I had never heard the term until detectives with the San Jose Police Department presented it at a recent meeting of the San Francisco chapter of InfraGard. While the concept initially was developed for schools, I think that it makes a lot of sense for every organization to put one together.

Basic Items

What should go into a Crisis Response Box? It really depends on the organization, but at a minimum it should contain:

■ **Keys, card keys, and combinations that will open every door in the facility.** For the fastest response time, use a master key system so that responders don't need to go through a chain of keys to get to the right one.

Make up at least three sets of keys on brightly colored lanyards. If there are keys for specific areas that are not on a master key, make sure they are labeled. If you can, use colors, numbers or symbols on the keys and the map, so that a responder standing at a specific door can quickly locate the key that will open it.

■ **Maps and floor plans of the facility on binder-sized paper.** It should be easy for the responder to fold the paper once and put it into a trouser pocket. Blueprints are not acceptable for this purpose. Make up 10 copies. At a minimum, the maps should use color codes or symbols to show:

- ◆ Hazardous areas, such as battery backup rooms and locations where toxic chemicals are stored or used.
- ◆ Shut-offs for gas, water, electricity, telephone, alarm, sprinklers, and cable TV systems.
- ◆ Locations of elevators, stairs, and entrances.

■ **Emergency point-of-contact lists, including your designees who will be working with responders as part of the Incident Command Systems (ICS).** This may include public information, corporate security, maintenance, and IT recovery. Make three sets, with home, work, mobile, pager numbers, and photographs if possible. Ensure that your own responders have an easy-to-identify marking on their badges so that responders can identify them by sight.

Additional Items

Once you have the basic items in place, you can add to the box:

■ **Overhead photos and maps.** Google maps can be used for this purpose. Keep as many as 20 maps, and laminate a handful of them for responders.

■ **Detailed blueprint-sized floor maps and diagrams** that can be used at a command site.

■ **Telephone numbers sorted by location** (retail store department, room, or desk).

■ **Spare radio and charged battery.** If you use two-way radios in your organization, have a spare

radio and charged battery in the box or nearby, and have a list of frequencies that are used in the radios.

If you are in a large building, shopping center, or campus, you should pre-designate these locations:

- ◆ Internal and external command posts.
- ◆ Staging area for emergency responders.
- ◆ Media staging area well away from the above staging area that can accommodate a large number of vehicles.
- ◆ Family center away from the first two staging areas, where family members can pick up their loved ones.

■ **Employee roster and point-of-contact phone numbers for employees and emergency contacts.** The roster should show a supervisor for every employee, since a supervisor should know whether their employees were on or off shift and their assigned area. Photographs will make it easier to identify key personnel and point out an employee if they are the source of the crisis. Supply a copy of the employee roster to building management. It can act as a backup copy, and if necessary, one comprehensive list can be provided to emergency responders.

■ **Utility, fire alarm and sprinkler shut-off procedures.** At the Columbine incident, the sprinklers were triggered, and no one knew how to turn them off. Hallways quickly filled with water, making it difficult to escape. In some places, water got dangerously close to electrical equipment.

Share Additional Ideas

After reading this article, you might have some ideas yourself, and I hope that you will share them with your fellow IAEM members.