

Safety To the Rescue?

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Introduction

All too often employers depend upon occupational safety and health professionals to manage the details when an emergency situation arises. This program will explore in detail the pitfalls and progress that can be encountered when safety comes to the rescue. This session will be presented from the perspective of two experienced safety professionals that are also experienced and highly trained emergency responders.

Some of the major questions addressed by this session include:

1. Why should we do anything?
2. When should we attempt a rescue?
3. Who should be involved?
4. How do we manage the rescue process?

This session will address each of these questions as we continue. For obvious reasons we begin with the why. Despite the type of employer the call for any type of emergency action plan is answered by management with why. Commentary such as that is what 911 is for and we are not in the emergency medical business usually follow.

Where Do Safety and Rescue Connect?

For the purposes of this presentation the term rescue is intended to define any emergency action taken to save lives, protect property, and preserve the environment. Safety professionals have traditionally been tasked with all items related to emergency actions and response, this comes

mainly from the fact the very often the safety person is the face of the company or site that has met the fire service and who they may be most familiar.

Very often safety professionals have fire or emergency services background from which most employers wisely tap as a resource when managing or planning for any emergency. There are numerous reasons that we could theorize why we get assigned this task however the bottom line is that very often there is no one else equal to the task. Ironically the work we do as safety professionals interpreting laws and standards, and dealing with the related issues to rescue are the ultimate qualifier for us as safety professionals to assume this role.

Liability: To Act or Not To Act

We have all heard of or been in the dilemma faced during an emergency or rescue situation regardless of it is in public or in the work place the first question everyone asks themselves is what do I do? This question has one major origin and that is If I do something will I get sued? If I do nothing can I be sued? This moral and ethical dilemma becomes even more difficult when it is in the workplace, and the victims are someone you are familiar with. This is the question that has haunted safety professionals for numerous years which has only increased

Although the harsh reality that regardless of what we do in today's litigious society all we can do is the best we can to reduce our liability and potential damages should a law suit result from our emergency actions. Nationally the appearance is that, though law suits are still common as a result of response efforts, the number of successful suits against those with well trained and organized efforts has decreased dramatically.

If we do nothing and just wait for help to arrive you can almost guarantee a successful law suit will be headed your way, regardless of the outcome of the situation. In most cases persons attempting rescues or involved in emergency actions are covered by Good Samaritan laws although these laws may vary by state, they generally are intended to protect responders from law suits as long as they are acting in accordance with the skills they have been trained in and did not willfully bring addition harm to the victim.

Why Not Wait?

The argument of whether or not to act often rests on the why not wait defense. This defense is often used when the neighborhood fire station is close by and can be on the scene in minutes. On television the fire department can handle any rescue with an ambulance and a fire engine so that is all they need right? However reality is far different from perception in this instance.

With the exception of small fire and medical emergencies this basic equipment responding to the scene will require additional assistance which dramatically increases the response time that would be effective in conducting any rescue beyond those described earlier in this paragraph. When it comes to the types of emergency or rescue situations that typically occur in industry most normal responses for rescue service are not fully equipped to manage them.

Most rescue squads are well equipped to handle vehicle and some machine type rescues, but when it comes to rescues from confined spaces or from arrested falls at high angles these typically require the skills of what is referred to as a Technical Rescue Team. Depending upon the area where the service is it may be a greater than average response time.

Ultimately anytime that a victim spends without oxygen or any interruption to the body's blood flow can greatly affect the survivability of even a healthy person from an emergency situation. Another common myth is that we should let the fire department do the rescue that way if anything goes wrong the families and OSHA will pursue them and not us.

Nothing could be further from the truth, OSHA frequently cites emergency services agencies for violations during rescue operations from violations ranging from Blood borne pathogens to confined space rescue, they are ten times more likely to show up on a work place rescue looking at the rescuers as they are the employer.

The bottom line in the whole debate over whether or not to respond or do anything is simple, it is human nature to help those in need. Your employees are going to attempt a rescue regardless of the scenario, you might as well make sure they are trained how to do it correctly.

Response Profiles

The response profiles of most emergency service agencies have become quite elaborate and are often not able to be gauged in terms of an average response time. Most agencies are however now sophisticated enough to dispatch units appropriately based on cues given by the 911 caller. However a missed cue on the dispatcher's part or misinformation by the caller not giving enough information on the emergency can cause the needed resources for the rescue to not be called to the scene until the first emergency units arrive and assess the scene.

Often time's most emergency services agencies are not very forth coming when it comes to admitting which scenarios they can handle and which they require assistance with, but if questioned carefully and not forced or rushed they will share this information with outside concerns such as safety professionals.

Standards Impacting Emergency Response & Rescue

Many standards and laws impact the training, tactics, and equipment used in response to emergency situations in the workplace by any public or private response teams. These include but are not limited to:

- Occupational Safety & Health Administration
- National Fire Protection Association
- American National Standards Institute
- US Department of Transportation
- US Environmental Protection Agency

Standards such as NFPA and ANSI are consensus standards which are developed by people in a particular field based on best practices of that particular discipline. Unless adopted into law by an authority having jurisdiction these standards are only recommendations. However if a consensus standard exists and knowledge existed of the standard, and that standard would have prevented an injury or death during a rescue then it will be used against you in a court of law.

Standards such as OSHA are law and must be complied with. The same is true of the US DOT which establishes the training criteria with which emergency medical services providers are trained and certified. US EPA directly deals with the protection of the environment during emergency response whether a hazardous materials incident or simple medical emergency.

Everyone Weighs In!

Emergency response can be a slippery slope and everyone wants to weigh in and add their two cents to your decision to rescue or not to rescue. These views are typically broken into three major categories these are:

Insurance Company View –

Will vary by carrier but the general consensus is that if the decision is to rescue, then it must be done correctly and be documented completely.

Emergency Services View –

The typical view of emergency responders is that outside of basic first aid workplace personnel should attempt any type of rescue. This mainly comes from dealings with untrained or spontaneous workplace rescuers who are only trying to help but are making matters worse in the process. To counter this you should invite local emergency services to participate in all training and preparedness exercises you conduct.

OSHA View –

In March of 2005 OSHA issued an interpretive rule addressing OSHA's policy on employee rescue efforts. This instruction clarifies OSHA's citation policy regarding employers whose employees perform or attempt to perform voluntary rescues of individuals in life-threatening danger. Prior to this, the agency had no written instruction to its field offices providing guidance in situations involving employee rescue efforts although a variety of OSHA standards contain precautions and safeguards for rescue-related operations including the standards for process safety management, hazardous waste operations, confined spaces, and grain handling.

Also, in the construction standards, specific rescue precautions are prescribed for work performed near or over water and for excavation work. This instruction ruled that OSHA will not issue citations to any employer under any OSHA standard or the general duty clause of the OSH Act for any rescue activity by its employees except when the employer has not specifically designated and trained employees with responsibility to perform or assist in a rescue operation.

Rescue Planning

The key to realize as an industrial or private response entity is to carefully plan for the potential emergencies that can arise in your workplace. As a safety professional this is no different than conducting a task or job hazard analysis just with response measures instead of proactive accident prevention methods being highlighted. Factors to carefully consider when engaged in the planning process should include the identification of which personnel to train to respond, the source to be used for such training, and what type of rescue equipment will be needed.

Budget will also play a key role into how involved your onsite rescue process can go. Often times rescue efforts will start out with a shoe string budget. If this is the case simply prioritize your efforts starting with emergency medical gear and progressing from there base it on your assessment of how likely an emergency is to occur, and how likely that emergency is to cause serious injury or death if rescue is not performed quickly.

Specific Incident Considerations

Response Type	Considerations
Fire	Charged Fire Extinguishers / Proper Training Hand On
Medical	Portable equipment stocked to provider skill level
Hazmat / Spill	Equipment to meet hazard / Training in HAZWOPER
Rescue at Height	Rope access training / Properly trained responders
Caught In Rescues	Equipment & tools to lift, move, or disassemble
Rescue from Enclosed / Confined Spaces	Rope access equipment and training, air monitoring equipment and training. Self contained breathing apparatus.
Structural Collapse Rescue	Shoring Lumber / Form Scaffold / Trained Personnel
Vehicle / Equipment Rescues	Hydraulic rescue equipment and basic hand tools, equipment necessary to stabilize the vehicle or equipment during rescue operations.
Mine / Tunnel Rescue	Specialized mine / tunnel rescue gear and training
Electrical Emergencies	Non conductive equipment and trained responders

Response Team Composition

Numerous options exist when trying to plan response measures. Something as basic as the type of workplace can impact a rescue / emergency response plan greatly. The makeup of your workplace response may often have to be modified as the hazards and the workforce change. Compiling a team may be seen in any number of ways these include but are not limited to:

- Internal Response Team
- External Response Team – Public
- External Response Team – Private
- Composite Response Teams
- Mutual Aid Agreement Teams

Training

When beginning the training process the vital first step in the process is to begin by properly selecting the trainees for your program. Careful evaluation should be made of the candidates for your program to ensure that each are physically and mentally able to handle the additional responsibility, as well as the ability to stay calm under pressure.

Some companies will actually conduct physical agility testing with their candidates to ensure that they can safely complete the training program and be able to function in an emergency. Once you have selected your trainees, it is time to start the training process. The best method to train your internal responders is by use of hands on training programs. Although there will always be items that will require lecture sessions the absolute best way to reinforce the items learned is by practical applications.

When adult learners learn by experience they are 90% more likely to recall what they had learned in an emergency situation. Practical evolutions and exercises should always be kept as realistic as possible and as the students' progress with their skills additional pressure should be placed on them in training to simulate the pressures of a real incident. The most important aspect of this entire training process is that you must train like you wish to respond and respond to rescues in the same manner in which you train.

Practice, Practice, Practice – The more a response becomes second nature to those involved, the more successful the outcome will be.

Competency of Personnel

Several standards require that we as employers and safety professionals evaluate responders that will come into or from within our workplaces to perform rescues in a vast array of possible scenarios. This however is often difficult with some emergency service agencies because of call volume and occasionally attitudes within the agency to get them where they can be properly evaluated. An easy way to overcome this challenge is to offer these outside responders and their agencies free training opportunities at your workplace to practice the skills you need to evaluate anyway.

Internal personnel teams are far easier to deal with when it comes to evaluations of this kind. Be sure that once initial training is complete frequent drills, scenarios, and training for team members in order to maintain proficiency. The use of annual proficiency checks are also a valuable tool in assessing competency of personnel in this role. The use of video taping during training exercises is a good tool to use for highlighting both the good and bad results of training activities and much like a post game film, can be used to improve performance before the next game.

Logistics

After training the next large item that needs to be addressed is the logistics of rescue operations. Logistics deals with ensuring that all of the materials, tools, and equipment necessary to put the

training to use are available in an emergency. This process involves the purchase, inspection, ongoing maintenance and coordination of outside resources necessary to achieve the goal of performing emergency operations in the workplace. When dealing with this topic as a safety professional here are a few key tips to keep you out of trouble:

- Research the latest gear available and decide what is right for your company.
- Convincing vendors to loan you trial equipment to test drive the equipment is always a good thing!
- Keeping a stockpile of the right items and keep it mobile
- Never buy rescue gear from a safety gear only vendor unless they have the best price
- Never reuse rescue gear unless it is specifically designed to do so

Commercial vs. Emergency Services Incident Command

If the CEO is at the scene of an emergency is he in command of the incident? The answer is no, not unless that CEO is an active and trained member of the companies emergency team! How is that possible? He is the CEO! It is relatively simple, in most cases the CEO does not have the time to train with or even fully comprehend what a response team may do in their workplace.

If this person is not trained like the rest of the team then they do not possess the skills needed to lead a team in an emergency. Failing to follow this mantra can easily result in the serious injury to a responder or the victim they are trying to help. The most common school of thought when it comes to emergency teams is they often create their own incident management system. This is great, however if you are hoping to be able to interface with and speak the same language as outside responders you should follow the path that already has been created.

Shortly after 9/11/01 the government realized that multiple emergency service agencies from multiple states operating on the same incident made integrating any kind of common incident management system impossible.

Thus the National Incident Management System was created by FEMA. The ICS-100 and ICS-200 programs train responders in the new nationalized standard and also provide free training opportunity for industrial teams to get on the same page. The training is available at the following web site free of charge:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is100.asp>

Dealing With the Media

Define roles

One trusted staff member should have the ultimate responsibility to serve as the press liaison.

Observe deadlines

Reporters live and die by them, as do their respective media operations. A story won't die if a someone doesn't provide information by a deadline. Instead, the material will run without the organization's perspective.

Be available

News is an around-the-clock operation. Having an on-call system in place can provide the media with names and telephone numbers to call after hours or during an emergency.

Be helpful

You may not be the person with whom the media need to talk, but make sure you get back to the reporters with the contact they need to complete their job. Delayed? Call a reporter back to explain.

Think like a reporter

Think about information, graphics or other details that can help the reporter tell the story and enhance the organization's position and visibility.

Coordinate

Everyone in the organization should understand how press calls are handled. If an issue is making news, everyone who answers a phone should know how calls are to be handled.