Emergency & Crisis Management in Human Resource Management & Development

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"If you wanna hear God laugh, tell Him your plans" (Van Zant Lyrics). The truth in this lyric relates more to emergency situations in more ways than one. The obvious fact is that one cannot change the weather, just as one cannot read another individuals' mind, and predict if that individual will commit a crime, which is unknown even to the best detective.

While man cannot control storms and natural disasters, terrorism is thought to be something under watch by the United States Government. Although, even with all of the federal, state, and local agencies that are in existence, there are still terrorists and criminals that slip through the cracks. Since 9/11, there is an increased fear factor of terrorism in American society. As Mankin and Perry describe, *"Fear has a lasting impact, it gets your attention and then refuses to give it back"* (2004).

However, when disaster strikes, there are professionals trained to handle the volatile situations. The professional rescue workers and emergency managers that come in to help, also include a new group of professionals that walks onto the playing field, Human Resource Managers. These managers must work as a team, and develop strategies that can combat a storm, tornado, hurricane, and even a terrorist action, and since 9/11, Human Resource Managers have been re-evaluating their emergency plans to make the system in their company or municipality work better.

In order to get a plan in place, an Emergency Manager or Emergency Management team, must first have a team leader with the proper knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), "that carry out organizational tasks and functions" (Siegel, 1985), to lead and organize a team, although, an Emergency Management Specialist (EMS) is used to refer to a cluster of KSAs. "Once derived, they provide the basis for development of personnel selection and assignment procedures, training or learning objectives, and position design or redesign variables" (Siegel, 1985). Additionally, Emergency Management Specialists are considered to be known and carry out the duties of their job, which is participating in the "managerial function charged with creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters" (Thiel & Jennings, 2012). In other words, Emergency Managers step in at a time of crisis.

Although there are professionals in place that are trained to handle emergency and crisis situations, there are still disasters, both natural and manmade that will crush any Emergency Management plan. As the Yiddish proverb says, *"Man plans, God laughs"* (Berman, Bowman, West, & Van Wart, 2013). However, there are steps that Human Resource or Emergency Managers can be put in place that have the training to combat these disasters from hurting or killing large amounts of people by using migration and relocation techniques to shelters or areas that were not destroyed by a natural disaster, such as a tornado, flood, or hurricane.

There is a vital need for Human Resources Specialists, and Human Resource Development techniques to intervene and help in emergency and crisis situations. Of the many stages in crisis management and organizational learning, it usually takes a massive disaster such as September 11th or Hurricane Katrina to make Emergency Management and Human Resource Specialists to re-think their emergency management plans. It is only after a crisis that organizations go through three stages, defensiveness, openness, and forgetfulness (Premeaux & Breaux, 2007). However, in Crisis Management planning, a common mistake is only thinking about the "company's human capital only after plans are made for the organization's systems, operations, infrastructure, and public relations…Organizations must give more consideration to the effects of critical events on their employees" (Premeaux & Breaux, 2007). In preparation for training and education, having written human resource policies and procedures, as well as employee training and development, Human Resource Specialists offer the opportunity to make

valuable contributions in planning and implementation in the situation of a crisis (Premeaux & Breaux, 2007).

One major piece of Emergency Management training and development is having good communication, which is made up from Human Resource Managers providing employees with 800 numbers to call in case of an emergency, email, website and bulletin board postings, as well as text messaging. From their experience with the 2001 Seattle earthquake, "Starbucks used a voicemail system…to tell Starbucks employees call or text message the company to make sure that everyone was accounted for" (Premeaux & Breaux, 2007). However, when it comes to informing large amounts of people, the media plays a vital role in communication, because no government emergency management agency comes close to the communication given by the established "television, radio, and newspaper outlets across the country" (Haddow, Bullock, & Coppola, 2008). Moreover, the basic Emergency Management community consists of the general public, disaster victims, business community, media, elected officials, community officials, first responders, and volunteer groups (Haddow, Bullock, & Coppola, 2008). Additionally, when Hurricane Sandy struck the Northeast, an FDNY social media manager kept citizens informed of Sandy news through Twitter posts (McKay, 2013).

Another training technique in Organizational Development is the use of Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Just as the job as first line manager, an Emergency Management Specialist must also oversee different kinds of emergency management training, that include organizing, analysis and decision-making, planning, communication (written & oral), carefulness, organizational knowledge, integrity, development of others, and most importantly; listening (Aamodt, 2010). Additionally, Emergency Management Specialists and Human Resource Managers can also develop a training program by using handouts, presentations, role playing, coaching, and the most practical; on-the-job training (Aamodt, 2010).

Although there might be an Emergency Management Specialist in place, or a Human Resource Manager in charge of developing emergency management procedures in their department, a bigger agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has the responsibility for coordinating the federal government's role in "preparing for, migrating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror" (FEMA, 2012). Following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, FEMA joined 22 other federal agencies, programs and offices, and became part of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003 (FEMA, 2012).

There are however facilities, such as hospitals that are not equipped to handle a large natural disasters or terrorist attacks, which have included Hurricane Irene and the Madrid bombings (McAlister, 2011). These types of events are called Mass Casualty Incident's (MCI) or "MASCAL," in which the hospital that receives disaster victims or victims from a terrorist attack is capable to tend to multiple patients at the same time (McAlister, 2011). It may be bad judgment or poor planning, but the Oklahoma City bombing and the Columbine shooting should have been a warning sign to the United States that Mass Casualty Incidents were possible. Although, on and before September 11th, 2001, the United States just got the message, seeing all of the past domestic terror attacks that struck America. The past events such as the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the Centennial Park bombing at the Olympic games in 1996, and the attacks from the Unabomber that lasted almost twenty years should have caught the government's attention. Even today, the question is still asked. Why was 9/11 the wake-up call for the United States to finally implement an emergency management plan that works?

The reasons that the United States may have failed to put a full proof emergency and crisis management plan maybe only known to government officials in office. However, seeing that in the years after 9/11, all that was in the news was the 9/11 Terror Attacks. Although after the attacks happened, the United States government did in fact establish the Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for safeguarding the United States, as well as putting together emergency and crisis management plans. This however is not full proof either.

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, it took FEMA five days to get water to the superdome where the survivors and flood victims were evacuated. The one common mistake that many local governments make is not putting their human capital first. Before a company worries about operations, infrastructure and public relations, the employees are the most important part of Emergency Management planning. It is the job of Human Resources management to get their employees back to work and paid on time following a disaster such as Hurricane Katrina (French, Goodman, & Stanley, 2008). In October of 2006, President George W. Bush signed into the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act, which thoroughly reorganized FEMA (FEMA, 2012). This was the first step in making a better emergency and crisis response department, seeing that FEMA's mission statement reads, "To lead America to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from disaster with a vision of "A Nation Prepared" (FEMA, 2012).

The sad thing is that even though FEMA was reorganized, and the Department of Homeland Security has been established, there are still acts of violence that do not occur because of terrorism. Before the mass Columbine tragedy, and even after, there have been school shootings. However, since the years after Columbine, school shootings have been spreading onto college campuses as well. In 2007, America suffered one of the most tragic shootings on a college campus. Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia was struck by a lone gunman who ended up killing 32 people, as well as wounding many others (Wang & Hutchings, 2010). What a crisis event does to the college community is raise the question of whether other colleges can implement a fast enough response time for emergencies, "while still maintaining a culture of inclusivity and open access" (Wang & Hutchings, 2010).

In implementing a plan that works effectively to protect faculty and students against school shootings, there are Human Resource practices developed for crises. There are five areas in which a Human Resource Specialist can focus in the event of an emergency. First, during the event of a crisis, leaders must use a specific set of training skills that will create a resolution to the emergency at hand. Additionally, the skills that the Human Resource Specialist possesses must also preserve or enhance the operating capabilities of the organization, as well as employee morale and the images the company has with stakeholders including financial status and other resources (Wang & Hutchings, 2010). Second, developing and enhancing crisis awareness and building as well as expanding knowledge with other crisis management leaders (Wang & Hutchings, 2010). Third, is to make sure that the proper crisis communication system is in place. "Effective communication requires effective technological support" (Wang & Hutchings, 2010). Fourth, a crisis management program should be implemented, where there is a working portfolio of procedures that should be implemented in case of a crisis. The portfolio should include a list of probable events that an institution may face. Lastly, the most important one is promoting organizational learning, where in the case of Virginia Tech, the college did not have the proper Human Resource Developers in place, nor did they have the proper organizational learning team in place either (Wang & Hutchings, 2010).

Another problem that lies within emergency and crisis management is Occupational Violent Crime (OVC), or simply workplace violence. Violence in the workplace is known to happen more in the public sector, rather than the private sector. One of the main reasons that the public sector is thought to be under a higher level of violence, is the fact that the public sector is constantly threatened by "anti-government violence involving frustrated clients, terrorist groups with political motives, and individuals who are just plain angry bureaucrats" (Nigro & Waugh, 1996). Before September 11th, 2001, the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City served as the worst domestic terrorist attack to hit the United States. It was also the worst terrorist attack that killed a large amount of public sector employees.

In a ten-year span between August 1983 and May 1993, there were 10 different incidents of murderous violence that occurred in the Postal Service by current or former employees. 29 postal service employees were killed, and 16 were wounded. This is something that Human Resource Managers and public policy makers could not ignore. It is also something that can be prevented with the help of employers. There have been cases where employers have neglected to deal with physical security problems. Problems with inadequate lighting and alarm systems are two areas where employers have failed to identify as a reason that workplace violence is occurring. There are also other workplace violence factors that are social and psychological in nature, such as working conditions and management policies (Nigro & Waugh, 1996). However, reconstructing building security policies can make a big difference in the amount of occupational violent crime incidents.

To combat this problem of workplace homicide, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and other agencies have developed workplace homicide and violence prevention strategies. These strategies include; making high-risk areas visible to more people, installing good inside lighting, using drop safes or boxes to make cash handling minimal, always carrying small amounts of cash, installing silent alarms and surveillance cameras, increasing the number of staff on duty, provide training in conflict resolution that includes nonviolent response, avoiding distance during a robbery, providing bullet-proof barriers or enclosures, having police checks on workers on a routine basis, and finally, close establishments during high-risk hours; both late at night and early in the morning (Nigro & Waugh, 1996).

While society lives in a post 9/11 world, we should not forget why the events of 9/11 or Oklahoma City took place. There were supposed to be security policies in place that were not put into effect and because security was down, terrorists, both foreign and domestic, were able to attack the United States. As Nigro and Waugh state, *It was too easy for the Oklahoma City bombers to drive their explosives-laden truck right up to the front of the federal building and leave it there. Simply prohibiting the parking of unauthorized vehicles within a specified security zone might have discouraged the bombers"* (1996).

The truth is, even after the first attack on the Trade Towers in 1993, as well as the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in 1995, Human Resource Managers did not see terrorism as an issue in the United States or even in other countries, even in the late 90's (Mankin & Perry, 2004). It has only been within the last few years that Human Resource Managers have started to recognize terrorism as an issue. Moreover, the engagement level of public safety agencies and first responders has increased at all levels of government, and homeland security has also influenced public building layout and construction (Kemp, 2012). Another new feature that current and future government buildings will have is limited vehicle access (Kemp, 2012). "It is not likely that they will provide underground parking; parking will be away from such facilities" (Kemp, 2012).

Even with police response teams and emergency personnel that are trained to protect the public, there is still a fear factor amongst employees who experience a traumatic event. This was largely seen after 9/11, including October 2001, because of the anthrax scare that was happening. Many fire departments received emergency calls from citizens who believed they were mailed a package containing anthrax (Mankin & Perry, 2004). However, the media also "hyped-up" this anthrax scare as well, which also instituted more fear among American citizens. This media hype is clearly seen in years of disaster movies, novels, and news coverage. This creation of fear in the media does nothing more than create a society that is frightened of what they see in the news, and live their lives with the attitude that something bad will happen to them in the outside world.

All in all, terrorism, and natural disaster, which has plagued the United States over the past few years, will not go away. This can be clearly seen by the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, which wiped out New Orleans, Hurricane Irene, which flooded New Jersey, the massive E5 Tornado which demolished Joplin Missouri, and most recently Hurricane Sandy that eliminated the power from New York and New Jersey for a week, as well as destroyed the coastline and beach fronts in New York and New Jersey.

While the outlook for the United States may look thin with all the storms and destruction that has been brewing about for the last few years, it important that Human Resource Managers, including Emergency Management Specialists continue to gain support and recognition from the public. These disasters and terrorist attacks have opened up a whole new wave in research and development. Even with all the professional Emergency Management organizations and agencies that exist, it boils down to one thing. *"When government has the right people, and the right system, and the right intentions, many good things are possible. The trick is knowing which ones they are"* –Alan Ehrenhalt (Berman, Bowman, West, & Van Wart, 2013).

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