

## **Does Accreditation Help an Agency in Mass Casualty Events?**

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Accreditation for police agencies can be accomplished through a variety of state agencies. A Google search reveals a minimum of 11 states that provide an accreditation process on a state basis. National or international police accreditation is even more limited. The only agency that provides such accreditation is CALEA<sup>®</sup>, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. This discussion will be limited to accreditation through CALEA.

The Commission was formed in 1979 through the efforts of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National Sheriff's Association (NSA), and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). The Commission's 21 members are appointed to terms of 3 years by majority vote of the executive directors of these major law enforcement organizations (CALEA, 2006).

According to CALEA, the organization was created to:

- Increase agency capability to control and prevent crime
- Increase the ability to provide effective and efficient law enforcement services
- Increase cooperation and coordination within the criminal justice system
- Increase citizen and employee confidence in the goals, objective, practices, and policies of the agency
- Provide an accreditation process that gives agencies an opportunity to voluntarily demonstrate compliance with an established set of professional standards (Standards, 2001, xiii).

Accreditation provides an agency the opportunity to illustrate that it voluntarily meets established standards which, among other things, requires that the agency have a

preparedness program to address natural or man-made critical incidents (Standards, 2006, xv).

Agencies are required to address 459 standards to attain accreditation. According to the Commission, these standards reflect best practices and professional requirements for law enforcement. According to CALEA, the “standards state *what* must be accomplished by the agency but generally allow wide latitude in determining *how* to achieve compliance with each applicable standard.” By dictating only the “what” rather than the “how,” the agency retains independence and compliance can be achieved in a variety of ways (Standards, 2006, xvii). The distinction between working toward the end-state of *what* must be accomplished, rather than following a template of *how* it will be accomplished can be critical.<sup>1</sup> To address particular local conditions, an agency must be given the flexibility to adjust business practices in response to the changing nature of policing and responding to critical incidents.

Part and parcel of the accreditation process is the concept of “written directives.” Many, if not most, of the standards require that the agency have a written directive addressing a particular issue (see for example, footnote 1). A written directive is “(a)ny written document used to guide or affect the performance or conduct of agency

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<sup>1</sup> An example of the ‘what’ not ‘how’ is illustrated by Standard 1.3.3 which requires an accredited agency to have a written directive governing warning shots. The standard does not require that an agency prohibit warning shots (although the commentary to the standard does seem to discourage the use), only that the agency particularly describe the circumstances under which officers may use them. This permits a modicum of local control despite the emphasis on the national/universal standards inherent in any accreditation process.

employees. The term includes policies, procedures, rules and regulations, general orders, special orders, memorandums, and instructional materials.” (Standards, 2006, A-14).<sup>2</sup>

Critical incidents are primarily addressed in Chapter 46 of the Standards Manual. In the Fourth Edition, the chapter is titled “Unusual Occurrences and Special Operations” (Standards, 2001). This edition became effective in November 2001. In apparent recognition of the increased risk of acts of terrorism, the Fifth Edition changes the title to “Critical Incidents, Special Operations, and Homeland Security” (Standards, 2006). The standards have also been changed to reflect this increased risk. The Fifth Edition was adopted by the Commission with an effective date of July 2006 (CALEA Update, 2006).<sup>3</sup>

In both editions, the standards reflect the use of the Incident Command System (ICS). The later edition notes that the standards are consistent with the structure of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and recognize that ICS is a component of NIMS (see [www.fema.gov/nims](http://www.fema.gov/nims)). The question can be raised whether these are Industrial Age models that are of questionable relevance in the Information Age—particularly if we in policing continue our reliance on bureaucracy and blind adherence to following chains of command.

### **Relevant Standards**

CALEA Standard 46.1.1 requires a position in the agency that is responsible for planning for critical incidents. This position is designated as the principal planner and

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<sup>2</sup> While in theory there may be enough flexibility built into this definition to permit the innovative approaches to policing that will be necessary in the future, it remains to be seen whether there will be sufficient flexibility in practice. It is critical that policing have the ability to explore new and different approaches.

<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy that almost 5 years elapsed after the attacks of 9/11 before the more specific standards addressing homeland security were adopted. While it may be typical of policing, one of the more bureaucratic industries, to take this long to address an issue, we must in the future be quicker (not to mention more willing) to adapt to change and adopt new ways of doing business.

advisor to the agency's Chief Executive Officer. It is also suggested that this position be charged with the responsibility of expediting resources (Standards, 2006, 46.1.1).

Certainly a position such as this and the ability to quickly obtain resources are vital elements in addressing critical incidents.

An agency is required to have an "All Hazard" plan for responding to disasters, civil disturbances, acts of terrorism, and other unusual occurrences or critical incidents. This plan must follow the protocols of ICS and address command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration. These protocols are discussed more fully below. The commentary (a non-binding narrative to the standard designed to provide direction) states that ICS "has proven very effective in federal and fire service emergencies over the past two decades." Additionally, it is noted that standardized management processes, protocols, and procedures inherent to the Incident Command System will permit a coordinated response and allow responders to share a common focus. The standardization will allow responders to "place full emphasis on incident management when a critical incident occurs—whether terrorism or natural disaster" (Standards, 2006, p. 46-2). While there are examples of ICS being effectively used over the years, the process has been widely questioned in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Policing must be prepared to question the status quo of industry practices, including ICS.

The command function of ICS is required to address, *inter alia*, activating the system, establishing a command post, obtaining other agency support, maintaining safety of affected personnel, and preparing an after action report (Standards, 2006, 46.1.3). The operations function is a tactical component and must address perimeters, evacuations, traffic control and direction, and post-incident investigations (Standards, 2006, 46.1.4).

The planning function requires agencies to prepare an action plan, gather and disseminate intelligence, and plan post-incident demobilization (Standards, 2006, 46.1.5). The logistical issues, including communications, transportation, medical issues, suppliers, and specialized team and equipment needs must be addressed in the All Hazard Plan (Standards, 2006, 46.1.6). Under the finance/administrative function, issues relative to personnel time expended in the incident, resource procurement and other expenses, and documenting injuries for potential liability must be addressed (Standards, 2006, 46.1.7).

Equipment used in critical incidents must be inspected monthly according to the Fourth Edition (Standards, 2001, 46.1.6) or quarterly according to the Fifth Edition (Standards, 2006, 46.1.8). Annual training on the All Hazard Plan is required. This can be either field training or tabletop exercises, but all affected personnel must receive the training (Standards, 2006, 46.1.9). The standards relating to ICS and NIMS other than annual training are applied to every sized agency. Agencies with fewer than 25 sworn and non-sworn personnel are exempt from the training requirement (Standards, 2006, 46.1.9).

In recognition of the increased probability of terrorist attacks, the Fifth Edition has created a new section of standards regarding homeland security. These standards require that all accredited agencies maintain liaison with “appropriate agencies for the exchange of information relating to terrorism” (Standards, 2006, 46.3.1) and have procedures for forwarding terrorism-related intelligence/information to “the proper task force or agency” (Standards, 2006, 46.3.2). The importance of effectively sharing information and intelligence cannot be overemphasized.

An “other than mandatory standard” (an agency can opt to not meet 20% of standards characterized as other than mandatory) requires that the agency provide terrorism awareness training within its jurisdiction. According to the commentary, this training should address how to report suspicious activity that might be related to terrorism. This training can be accomplished using public and private community organizations and individuals (Standards, 2006, 46.3.3). Involving the public in identifying such activities is consistent with Neighborhood Driven Policing (Levin & Myers, 2005).

Neighborhood Driven Policing (NDP) is described as a partnership between the neighborhood and the police, differing from Community Oriented Policing (COP) in that in NDP, the neighborhood members through a board are the senior partners. The neighborhood members/board makes decisions formerly made exclusively by police, such as resource allocation and outcomes assessment. In addition, the neighborhood serves as a resource. Training them to recognize suspicious activity, which could potentially avert a critical incident, would enhance the vision of NDP, particularly using citizens as a resource.

An accredited agency in the United States must have chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBRN), and hazardous materials awareness level guidelines and follow Department of Homeland Security standards for CBRN equipment for its first responders (Standards, 2006, 46.3.4). There are other standards that might relate to critical incidents. For example, Standard 11.2.1 relates to unity of command and requires that each employee be accountable to only one supervisor at a given time (Standards, 2006, 11.2.1). The fundamental nature of the Incident Command System and/or the

flexibility suggested in Network Centric Policing (Cowper, 2005; see also Myers & Cowper in this volume) could conceivably be at odds with an application of this principle applied too strictly. The counterargument should be that even in those situations, at those times, the employee DOES only report to one supervisor.

An agency is required to have procedures for purchasing or renting equipment in emergency situations (Standards, 2006, 17.3.1). Having procedures to obtain resources and identifying the position responsible for expediting resources (see the earlier discussion regarding 46.1.1), will assist an agency in providing needed equipment to responding officers.

It can be argued that the above standards do indeed represent the current state of what is considered effective and efficient policing. After all, having directives in place detailing how to deal with a critical incident, ensuring that equipment is in a state of operational readiness, and regularly training personnel on how to deal with unusual occurrences are marks of an efficient agency: it is doing things right. A more appropriate consideration might be whether or not these standards are the mark of an effective agency: one that is doing the right things. The ultimate question is whether the standards are consistent with where policing should be going. The very characterization of CALEA requirements as “standards” implies a standardization that may not be appropriate in the Information Age. This is particularly true if one considers the move toward networking in policing and other endeavors. As noted, accreditation standards are said to reflect what issues need to be addressed by the agency rather than specifying exactly how to address the standard. In addition, while NIMS has been described as being a balance between standardization and flexibility (FEMA, 2006), it could be argued that NIMS continues the

institutionalization of bureaucracy in policing. As noted by Cowper (2005), the Information Age requires less emphasis on bureaucracy and standardization and more emphasis on flexibility through networking and self-synchronization.

Accreditation, on its face, is not antithetical to new methods of critical incident response and can, in fact, be useful to an agency in ensuring that it “has its ducks in a row,”— i.e., that it meets national standards of efficiency and effectiveness. In light of responses to recent disasters, one could question whether or not the standards established in the past will still be valid in future policing efforts. It appears that following existing protocols did not provide effective response to Hurricane Katrina. Is that indicative of future disasters? In any event, it is suggested that the typical application of ICS can be mired in a bureaucratic mode that adversely impacts service to those in need and the recovery from the incident. The future calls for a move toward networking, potentially less, rather than more, upward communication, and a move toward values based responses rather than rule-based responses. That is, in critical incidents, “protect and serve” has to take precedence over rules and “running things up the chain.” In the world of accreditation, with an emphasis on written directives, moving from a rules-based system may prove difficult. It is necessary that national, state, or local accreditation groups be ready to change rapidly and be less rigid in their efforts/requirements for written directives and plans cast in concrete. Even if accrediting agencies reflect the necessary flexibility, the question then becomes: will the policing industry accept the move away from the bureaucracy that is so engrained in our culture?

If the standards of accrediting agencies and NIMS will be (or **can** be) interpreted to allow the degree of flexibility needed, then a process for revising standards in a timely



manner to address new methods of policing will need to be developed. Society can ill afford to wait years to address these issues. If society will accept incremental change, broader interpretations and tweaking standards will work. If, as some advocate, widespread institutional change is needed in policing, the standards of NIMS and accrediting agencies will need broader change to address new modes of policing. One can rest assured that policing will be changed. If those of us involved in policing don't reinvent the industry, it will be reinvented for us...likely in a manner or to an extent we do not like.

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