Maintaining Effective Teamwork in Out-of-Scale Events

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BREAKDOWNS AND DISCONNECTS

- Breakdown = "a failure in coordination, cooperation or communication that leads to a temporary loss in the ability to function effectively."

- Disconnect = "individual instances of disagreement between participants."

DISCONNECTS

Operational disconnects

- a difference between the actions of one party and actions expected by the other party, or

- a mismatch in the plans that each party has about the physical operations of the response

DISCONNECTS

- *Informational disconnects*
  - a difference in the information that each party possesses

- *Evaluative disconnects*
  - a difference in the evaluation or appraisal of information that is available to both parties

Bearman et al. (2012)
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METHOD

1. 14 Semi-Structured Interviews
2. Participants in Aus & NZ who had recent experience
3. Age M=57; IMT Experience M=12
4. Bottom-Up Thematic Analysis

Image : Christine Owen

RESULTS

- Not Getting to Know Team Members
- Missing People Who Have Important Information
- Bypassing Normal Communication Channels
- Disrupted Coordination Between Different Agencies
- Taking Over Control From Another Team

Image: Christine Owen

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NOT GETTING TO KNOW TEAM MEMBERS

"Coz everyone was too busy, we had never sat down and said 'this is what we're doing, this is what I do".

"We didn't actually get to meet the incident controller and say who we were or what we did, there was no mating dance, none at all."

NOT GETTING TO KNOW TEAM MEMBERS

"The basic thing was that we didn't know each other's agencies, or what each other's skills or resources were."

"it's like being at a party with a lot of divorcees that didn't want to talk to each other."

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TEAM DEVELOPMENT

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning

   (Tuckman, 1965;
   Tuckman & Jensen, 1977)

NOT GETTING TO KNOW TEAM MEMBERS

"You wanna stand up and say what your skills are and say that you're here to help. And what that did is it laid it out and I could actually work out who I was dealing with."

NOT GETTING TO KNOW TEAM MEMBERS

"And you know really that worked very well and probably a key point in relation to why it worked well because we have spent so much time over the past ten years forging relationships with those agencies. We had trained together and played together."

MISSING PEOPLE WHO HAVE IMPORTANT INFORMATION

"We had a manger there who actually organized all the field things...he was deploying the teams each day...although the ops manager was talking to him during the day it was at the end of the day when we'd actually find out how his day went and how planning went for the next day. He should have been at the planning meeting, but he was never invited in."

BYPASSING NORMAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

"So we had people who were in field operations team wanting to text me first thing in the morning so that I could bring it up at the briefing, that operations needed to do something. Well that cut out, the team supervisor, the sector supervisor, the ops manager, back the and back across to the wildlife manager."

BYPASSING NORMAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

"So the staff they're doing a job over in the middle of the city…. They're not thinking that they're working for [organization x] or for [organization y], you know, and so they were tending to talk to our people because they know them."

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DISRUPTED COORDINATION BETWEEN AGENCIES

"But at that stage of the game there were, cultural divisions between agencies, and um those sort of things restrict your ability to have those conversations...It does impact on your approach to people. You don't have the free exchange of ideas, and you don't have that free debate that you would like to have. And that impacts on the analysis and therefore that impacts on the conclusions you draw. It's just a classic blocker to any communication."

SUB-OPTIMAL TAKE OVER FROM ANOTHER TEAM

"When the level three set up, for the life of me I cant understand how they chose what was going to be the new staging area. It was a totally inappropriate location for access and all sorts of reasons. And I can't for the life of me understand why they chose it. And they operated the realized it was hopeless and went to a second location which was good from the point of view of access room and that sort of thing but it was miles from anywhere. And finally after a week, the said "hang on, you guys have already got this figured out haven't you?" and moved back to the pre-planned location. Just come back to not talking to – it goes back to the communication breakdown."

SUB-OPTIMAL TAKE OVER FROM ANOTHER TEAM

"For someone to come in and write up an incident action plan and put a different set of [radio] channels in there without consulting the locals who have already set up a plan and then cause commotion when one of the [radio] channels they chose went to the aircraft which is broad area, upset a lot of people."

SUB-OPTIMAL TAKE OVER FROM ANOTHER TEAM

"Its probably something that I would suggest in that incident management team level... that there is actual training on how to sidle up to the locals, and actually take control in a non threatening way."

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure the skills and abilities of team members are known

- Construct ways to keep people in the loop

- Ensure that handovers are structured, positive and take previous decisions into consideration

- Simulation exercises

  - Formal and informal networks

  - Build trust and understanding between agencies

QUESTIONS?