Workgroup
Incident Command Systems
Presentation and Discussion

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- Member of the Akranes mountain rescue team since 1986
- Training:
  - mountain rescue
  - Incident commanding
Main goals of the workgroup

- Started/launched in November 2017
- Overview about Incident command systems used by different MR-Units
- Find new solutions for the same problems
- Discuss “Best Practice”
Edward Deming’s circle of improvements
Incident command, constant improvements

• What are the benefits?
• Main objectives with planning search and rescue operations
• Bringing the right people with the right training and right equipment
What characterizes a successful search and rescue

- Ratio of correct and incorrect information at the beginning of the operation
- Did the participants in the action get the right information on time?
- Does the story fit well with what was posted?
- Will the follow up take a short or long time?
- How do we measure this all?
What can go wrong in a rescue mission?

- The scope of chaos
- Wrong information
- Ability to spot information that can change the course of action
- Unexpected development of the rescue mission
- Overestimation of ability
- Overvaluation of equipment
- Please don't die with a perfect plan
- Every plan is perfect when they are published, but “No plan survives first contact with the enemy”
From search to rescue, challenges, fragile

- When the focus changes in action, can we respond quickly and change plans?

- Things to keep in mind:
  - Importance of keeping an overview, focus on security, making new plans, taking care of the rescue and the environment

- The importance of a powerful platform. Unified command. Continue gathering intelligence, information, dissemination

- Ensure communication

- Can we handle the situation?

- Time, distance, difficulty, equipment and rescue
Vatnajökull Glacier 17.05.2018

rescue of two travellers

How does it work in Iceland?
Country split in 16 regions (regional command)
Sharing information
Software, SAREYE Crisis & Incident Management platform
The beginning, phase one

18:35

- PLB Beacon sends out distress signal
- Beacon rented from ICESAR
- Travel plan known through SafeTravel. Two persons crossing the glacier
- Location of Beacon matches travel plan
- Heavy wind, fog, drifting snow, visibility 30-60m
- Helicopters unable to assist
**PHASE 1** – Rescue Mission
ICP in Höfn – No field Command

18:44
- ICP for Region 15 is activated

18:55
- Units from 3 Regions called out

19:20
- First units leave their Headquarters
- The plan was to go after travelers in trouble

23:39
- First Units Reach Beacon coordinates
00:22

- No sign of distress at beacon coordinates. Search within 300m radius has no results.
- Units from Region 13 and 16 still approaching
- Travel time on Glacier to location 3.5h both ways on snowmobiles
- Travel time on Glacier to location 5-7h both ways on Superjeeps and Snowcats
PHASE 2 – Search and Rescue Mission
IC is in charge – Field Command is a link

00:44
- Rescue operation ongoing for 6 hours
- More units called out from other regions. Travel time to Glacier up to 7h

01:15
- Visibility improves. SAR personnel continue searching a bigger area
- IC decides to transfer SAR personnel to the edge of glacier by helicopter
PHASE 3 – Search and Rescue Mission
Field Command is in lead – IC is backup and planning

01:35
- A large avalanche is discovered

02:08
- Pulk found in avalanche. Picture becomes clearer
- IC starts planning to have fuel, shelter and other provisions transferred to site

02:56
- Footsteps found leading from avalanche
PHASE 4 – Rescue Mission
Field Command is leading – IC is more in backup and planning

03:15
- Both persons found alive in a snow hole nine hours after they sent the PLB Beacon
- Both suffering from exhaustion and mild/severe hypothermia
- Taken to a hut not far away

05:14
- First super jeeps arrive to transfer them off the glacier

12:21
- Mission over. Both persons arrive at the town of Höfn
The aftermath

Edward Deming’s circle of improvements

• **We planned:** we designed a strategy that was logical
• **We did:** we implemented the plan and measured its performance
• **We checked:** we assessed the mission and reported the results to decision makers
• **We are acting.** Deciding on changes needed to improve the process

The hut in Grímsvötn
Summary from the salvage operation. Result and several points to work with

- Everything went well. People and equipment came home safe
- Plan vs reality
- Very long distances and major transport problems
- Facilities for work very difficult
- Large scale avalanche search in these circumstances would have created unforeseen problems
And lastly, can we do better in our Incident Command?
Where and how?
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