

Bringing Calm to Chaos

A critical incident review of the San Bernardino public safety response to the December 2, 2015, terrorist shooting incident at the Inland Regional Center

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Triage and transport: The golden hour rings true

At the triage area, firefighters and paramedics treated the victims, binding wounds and doing whatever they could to assist the injured. Tarps were put out, designating the different levels of trauma. One other tarp had to be set up for two victims who died either en route or at the triage.

Ambulances continued to arrive to take the wounded to local hospitals. Medical transport helicopters also landed on the golf course and transported a couple of the victims. Altogether, it took 57 minutes to get 22 wounded survivors, some critical, out of the IRC and to a hospital. In the medical community, it is believed that if injured or wounded people can be transported to a hospital in less than an hour—known as the golden hour—their likelihood of survival improves significantly.⁷⁰ In this case and on that day, every victim taken to a hospital survived.

At the same time, authorities led uninjured county employees and IRC staff to a nearby spot on the golf course and told them to stay there. Hundreds of people waited, sharing grief and tears and wondering what had just erupted in their world.

Despite the fact that transportation arrangements were made as soon as possible, the wait turned into three hours as authorities worked to clear the buildings. There were no bathrooms and little shade, and cell phone batteries were dead or dying, leading to a growing angst and frustration from many. But authorities needed people to stay as they all had been witnesses in one way or another and needed to be interviewed.

Discovery of secondary devices

As the SWAT teams continued to work their way back through the buildings, they encountered a new development, the sort of thing they had been warning each other about: secondary devices.

By this time, FBI SWAT agents had arrived on scene and were assisting officers combing through the crime scene inside looking for threats and explosive devices. At 5:08 p.m. as they worked in the conference room, one officer identified a suspicious bag and cleared the room. Shortly afterward, everyone was evacuated from the buildings and forced to move a safe distance away. The sheriff's bomb squad was called in, and officers began the arduous process of removing what turned out to be secondary explosive devices left in the bag by Farook when he left the meeting.

Investigators believed the secondary devices may have been left in the conference room to be detonated when the first responders were giving aid to the wounded or conducting the crime scene investigation. It is a frequent practice used in terrorist incidents. Bomb squad officers detonated the three pipe

⁷⁰ Charlie Eisele, "The Golden Hour," *Journal of Emergency Medical Services*, August 31, 2008, <http://www.jems.com/articles/2008/08/golden-hour.html>.

bombs individually, the last one taking place at 8:37 p.m. on the evening of December 2. The SBCSD bomb squad cleared the building a short time later. Once the building had been declared “tactically clear” it was handed back over to the SBPD.

A lead surfaces

During one interview conducted by a rookie SBPD officer, a county employee advised he had been watching one of his colleagues that morning. The employee noticed the colleague arrive and then leave early. A half hour later, when the shooting started, there was just something about the shooter, from his body language to his body composition, that seemed familiar. The employee advised that his name was Rizwan Farook.

Armed with a name, the rookie officer contacted his father, who was a sergeant in the SBPD’s narcotics unit. The name was quickly searched by both SBPD and SBCSD crime analysts, and a handful of persons with the same name turned up in neighboring communities, including Redlands, which shares an eastern border with San Bernardino. Officers were dispatched to all of the known addresses, some as far away as Temecula, about 45 minutes to the south.

Authorities then released to the public some information about the vehicle that witnesses had seen leaving the IRC parking lot. Several people called in reports, including one of a black SUV with Utah license plates. Police responded to each of the calls.

Back at SBPD headquarters, an analyst kept digging. She ran a plate number memorized by a caller who reported a suspicious black SUV. It was registered to a rental car company. She contacted the rental car company and asked about the name Rizwan Farook. An individual at the rental car agency provided information that led to the critical match being made.

SBPD sent an unmarked car to the Redlands address based on the information provided. There was no activity at the residence, but during interviews with neighbors following the incident, concerns were expressed over the number of people coming and going, along with late-night work in the home’s garage.

Unbeknownst to just about everyone at the command post or the Redlands Police Department, several members of the SBPD’s narcotics unit had also headed to the Redlands house. They were using the push-to-talk feature on their phones to communicate with one another, intentionally keeping themselves off the radio. Narcotics officers were concerned that anyone could listen in to radio transmissions—at least, those that are not encrypted systems—via a smart phone application. “The media was able to scan our radio,” explained a narcotics sergeant. “I did not personally feel comfortable using our unit radios in case they were listening or if the shooters were listening to a scanner app.”

The narcotics team had been 20 miles to the west conducting a surveillance operation when the first report of an active shooter hit the airwaves. After arriving at the IRC and seeing how hectic things were, the team headed to a nearby hotel and waited in the parking lot while the analyst was doing her research. Once the Redlands address was discovered, the team headed there.

Just as the officers arrived at the home, they saw the SUV leaving. The narcotics officers followed behind in their unmarked cars as the SUV traveled through Redlands before eventually heading toward the freeway back to San Bernardino.

The gunfight

A Redlands patrol sergeant was monitoring a pursuit of a stolen car on the west side of his city when he was flagged down by members of the SBPD narcotics team that had located the IRC suspects' SUV. Simultaneously, Redlands dispatch was broadcasting the same information to Redlands patrol units.

The Redlands sergeant updated dispatch as he and another Redlands patrol officer responded "Code 3" on Interstate 10 trying to locate the narcotics team that was following the suspects. The SUV had exited at Tippecanoe Avenue in San Bernardino, which is quite close to the IRC, as a SBCSD deputy joined in behind the Redlands police cruiser.

As the sergeant exited the interstate, he was slowed behind traffic waiting for a stop light to turn green. Narcotics officers who had been following the suspects stepped out and waved at the sergeant, pointing to the SUV that was three or four cars in front of him.

The sergeant drove his vehicle around a raised center median and into oncoming traffic to get in position behind the suspect vehicle and initiate a traffic stop. His continuous activation of emergency lights and siren, by all accounts, alerted the suspects to the police presence.

Knowing there were several undercover police officers as well as uniformed officers following in marked cars, the sergeant felt comfortable trying to make a stop. The SUV failed to yield. He could see it looked like its driver and passenger were putting on some sort of vests, and he put that information out over the radio.

The suspects turned east on San Bernardino Avenue and headed a short way down the street. The back window shattered from within, as gunfire erupted from what is now known to be .223 rounds fired by the female assailant who was in the back seat. The male subject was driving the vehicle. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputy came up at the same time, traveling parallel to the Redlands Police Department sergeant. Law enforcement officers from all three responding agencies—SBCSD, SBPD, and Redlands Police Department—broadcast on their respective radio channels that they were being shot at by the suspects in the SUV.

After the SUV drove several hundred feet past Richardson Street, it slammed on its brakes, with the sergeant stopping approximately 210 feet directly behind the SUV while the deputy stopped his cruiser on the opposite side of the street, approximately 68 feet northwest of the SUV.⁷¹

“As soon as the siren stopped and I put it in park, we were shooting at each other,” the deputy said, explaining that in the end, he was driving with his knee while holding his rifle pointing forward. More gunshots rang out. The female assailant opened the side passenger door and while lying on the SUV’s back seat shot at the deputy’s vehicle. The male assailant exited out of the driver’s front door, standing between the two open doors, and opened fire. He moved behind the front door of the SUV and shot as the sergeant headed to the back of his vehicle where he kept his AR-15.

The deputy got out of his car, using the B-pillar (which separates the front and back doors) for protection while shooting before moving to the back of the car to continue firing. He kept moving and shooting because of the changing angles of the male assailant.

At the same time, multiple other law enforcement vehicles came to a stop and officers engaged in the firefight. Some ran up to the sergeant’s vehicle while others used cars for protection or ran up through yards on the south side of the street.

The male assailant fired from the front of the SUV and began moving away from the car into the opposing side of the street, firing repeatedly at the deputy’s vehicle, riddling it with bullets. Meanwhile, the female assailant continued shooting from the back seat of the SUV, sometimes blind-firing in the direction of the growing number of officers. Other times, she fired out of a hole in the rear hatch of the vehicle, which was created by her firing multiple rounds through it.

As the deputy fired every gun that was available to him, consisting of a Mini-14, a shotgun, and a handgun, several officers realized the male assailant was trying to flank the deputy. They moved into better positions and trained their weapons on him. Their gunfire, along with the deputy’s, struck the male assailant in the legs and upper body. He dropped to the ground, dropped his AR rifle, and while in a seated position transitioned to his handgun and fired a round; then his weapon malfunctioned. Rounds continued to hit him and he tumbled to the ground. He tried to get up but took more gunfire, including to the head, and finally collapsed on the pavement.

“When I saw him [the male assailant] moving I went back to the pillar, he was pointing at me and I didn’t know if he was shooting,” the deputy said. “Later, I learned he was. He went down ultimately where he was killed, but before that, he switched to a handgun, and I kept shooting. I saw a bunch of blood coming out. I knew he was out of the fight.”

⁷¹ San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department Homicide Unit, in discussion with Police Foundation staff, June 27, 2016.

It wasn't until 13 hours later that the deputy realized he had been wounded. While taking a shower, he noticed that he had some blood on his leg. He suspected that a piece of shrapnel or gravel had possibly hit him in the upper left thigh.

The female assailant turned her weapon toward the officers, firing repeatedly. An SBPD narcotics officer was hit in the thigh; fortunately the wound was not life threatening. Another officer came to his side and quickly dressed the wound as the gunfight continued.

Several officers used a cruiser for cover and shot at the back of the SUV while moving up to rescue the deputy and the wounded narcotics officer. Meanwhile, officers continued to fire into the SUV from multiple directions. The barrage of gunfire eventually put a stop to the female assailant's attack after 13 bullets struck her body and two bullets struck her head.

Once a cease fire was called for, the Redlands sergeant looked around him for the first time since the shooting began. "I couldn't believe when I turned around and saw how many police officers there were standing behind the car," the Redlands sergeant said. "That was quite a sight to see."

More than 175 law enforcement officers from various local, county, state, and federal agencies had arrived.⁷² Altogether, 24 officers fired at least 440 shots at the vehicle. Several officers felt bullets whizzing by as they exited their vehicles approximately 80 yards back, one later describing a scene so strangely serene that he could clearly hear his own breathing. The suspects fired at least 81 rounds at officers.

Keeping the public informed

The SBPD has two officers assigned to public information duties, but neither is a full-time position. While the department deals with high levels of violent crime, which leads to significant attention from reporters throughout the region, it had not dealt with an incident as significant as the December 2 attack.

Vicki Cervantes, the SBPD's backup public information officer (PIO), was the first public affairs-trained officer on the scene. She began trying to talk to the continuously increasing number of media arriving at the crime scene. Before long, some 70 to 80 reporters had arrived, each looking for information, each looking for a scoop. They surrounded Cervantes and began a barrage of questions, most of which she did not have answers to because the incident was still developing.

Before leaving his office to head to the scene, Lieutenant Brad Toms, head of the SBCSD public affairs office, had tried to reach out by phone to the SBPD's lead PIO, but he did not answer. Unbeknownst to Toms, the lead PIO was out of the office for a family emergency.

⁷² San Bernardino Sheriff's Department Homicide confirmed 177 officer reports and interviews of personnel on scene.

Members of the SBCSD's public affairs unit (consisting of Lieutenant Toms, veteran PIO Cindy Bachman, and the department's social media specialist, Brittany Rios) headed to the designated media staging area and met with Chief Burguan, where they saw Cervantes had been enveloped by the press. They asked Burguan if he would like their assistance, which he readily welcomed.

Facing a series of major, media-frenzied incidents in two years may be more than any department would want to endure. But for the SBCSD's public affairs unit, this incident provided opportunities to use lessons learned from other incidents. In the office, the SBCSD's public affairs personnel answered calls that came in from all around the world. All of the information regarding the incident that could be released to the media was tracked on the department's interactive electronic screen that can be seen from any of the desks in the office. "It's the best way to ensure we are only releasing information deemed acceptable to be released to the public," Lieutenant Toms said. "We stay much more consistent that way."

The office has four other 55-inch televisions that display different news channels. Some staff monitored news stations to listen to what sorts of questions were already being asked and to listen for rumors that might be circulating and need to be addressed. In an incident like this, rumors were rampant.

A significant decision was made to include the PIOs in all command-level briefing and strategy sessions. That decision played a critical role in running the successful public affairs operation. "The reason we had the success we did was we could be with the sheriff and chief and FBI in those daily strategy sessions that was all unvetted information," Lieutenant Toms said. "They listened to us, our folks were doing research on the press, what they were following and saying, so we could have proper answers for them."

Bachman added, "When we arrived at the media staging area, we were quickly hearing this might be a terrorist event, so I figured the FBI would show up. You expect the worst, the communication with the federal agencies. . . . But when we went into the first briefing, I could tell things were going to be different. They were not holding anything back, even with us general employees in the room. It was very surprising, in a very positive way."

Also in the meetings was Rios. She was hired to a full-time position in 2014 to handle all social media duties for the department. "We didn't know how it was going to work, but I can say it was critical to the success of this event," Lieutenant Toms said.

Rios sent her first tweet at 11:18 a.m., announcing, "Hard Closure at Orange Show Rd/ Waterman and Park Center Circle in San Bernardino. AVOID THE AREA POLICE ACTIVITY!"⁷³ Eight minutes later, Rios reported via tweet that authorities had confirmed they had an active shooter. Altogether, she would tweet 42 times that day, with messages ranging from updated information to quotes from the multiple press conferences held that day.

⁷³ SB County Sheriff (@sbcountysheriff), "Hard Closure at Orange Show Rd/ Waterman and Park Center Circle in San Bernardino. AVOID THE AREA POLICE ACTIVITY!," Twitter post, December 2, 2015, 11:18 a.m., <https://twitter.com/sbcountysheriff/status/672132655052292096>.

“Brittany would write out her tweets—she would have them all ready so she could copy and paste, and then put them out at the exact same time as the speakers were saying it,” Lieutenant Toms said. Using social media, particularly Twitter, proved critical for media operations. Reporters calling the SBCSD in search of information were told to follow the Twitter pages of the department, the SBPD, and the FBI. “It cut down a lot of work so we could do other more important work,” Toms said. Some of that other work included handling the growing number of elected politicians who arrived at the crime scene looking for information and in some cases looking to find a television reporter for an interview.

Originally, Lieutenant Toms kept the department’s community relations officer, who also acted as the legislative liaison, at the headquarters to manage office operations. But before long, he realized that was a mistake. Toms brought the liaison down to the crime scene to talk face to face with elected officials and to keep them informed of important information as it developed. This allowed Chief Burguan, Sheriff McMahon, and Assistant Director Bowdich to concentrate their efforts on coordinating the overall response to the incident.

According to the community relations officer, local legislators called to ask what they should say if the media wanted to interview them. The community relations officer told them that he could not tell them what to say, because the investigation was ongoing. He told the officials it would be more appropriate if they stayed off camera, allowing public safety to handle the task at hand. The SBCSD has made it a point to build long-term relationships with elected officials in their region, and as a result of these relationships the officials generally followed the recommendations to refrain from discussing the incident with the media. In some cases, the community relations officer received calls from elected officials who simply wanted to offer support, understanding the gravity of the situation.

Early on, the SBCSD set up a 1-800 telephone number for people who were looking for information about potential victims. But because everything was moving so fast, the department did not have people manning the phones from the start, which initially led to problems. Eventually, employees manned all of the phones and were able to provide information to callers.

Hundreds of witnesses

Around this same time, just before 2:00 p.m., hundreds of county workers and IRC employees were moved from the San Bernardino Golf Course to the Rock Church, a “megachurch” that was only 1.2 miles from the IRC building. Authorities knew they needed a large place to interview what would be 444 witnesses, and the church leaders were willing to help. Local buses were used to transfer the witnesses to the site.

As witnesses got off the buses at the Rock Church, they were broken into two groups: those who had actually seen the shooters and those who had not. About 90 percent had not seen them. Those witnesses were kept in a multipurpose room where church employees had scrambled to set up tables and snacks.

A few dozen investigators had come to the church to conduct the interviews. Authorities realized it was going to be quite a challenge to track so many people. After some quick thinking, they began photographing each of the witnesses. On a whiteboard, which was used as background, they wrote each individual's name and date of birth.⁷⁴

"We had a script for all of the investigators," said a homicide sergeant. "For as chaotic as the situation could have been, the relationships with all of the agencies made it so it worked very well."

Many of the witnesses were frazzled from what they had just endured. Others simply wanted to go home because they had not seen anything but still found the ordeal troubling. Making matters worse was the fact that so many people's cell phones had dead batteries and they expressed frustration that they couldn't call loved ones when they felt a need to talk with someone.

Some of the witnesses believed that there were not counselors present at the church. The witnesses were asked to stay apart and not share stories; then they formed lines to have their pictures taken and subsequently boarded buses for transport to the Hernandez Center.

Once the interviews were complete, witnesses were taken back to buses and transported to the Rudy C. Hernandez Community Center, where they were reconnected with their significant others. The county probation department took charge of security there. City businesses and others kept coming, too, bringing food, water, and even some supplies.

Adding to the tense and emotion-filled situation, the media found out that the Hernandez Center was the location where witnesses were taken. Reporters, photographers, and camera operators awaited their arrival, each wanting to ask questions. It was uncomfortable and unnecessary, as witnesses walked through a gauntlet of media as they departed buses at the center.

Inside the center were several members of Counseling Team International, a locally based private practice that has contracts with multiple agencies in the area. The counselors met with some of the witnesses. Also on hand were several clergy members from the area who had self-deployed, wanting to help despite the fact that they had not been trained in critical incidents.

"The Hernandez Center was perfect, it had everything, even private rooms for us to meet with people," said Nancy Bohl-Penrod, the director of Counseling Team International. "And the community really helped. People just wanted to do something."

⁷⁴ Incidentally and after the fact, officers lamented not also writing down the person's contact information, the type of car they drove to work that day, and where they parked.

Multiple scenes tackled by multiple agencies

Chief Burguan, Sheriff McMahon, and Assistant Director Bowdich convened at the command post. The three leaders had been dealing with several unrelated swatting⁷⁵ calls as well as other potential shooting incident calls. Several supposed active shooter calls came in at such places as the Patton State Hospital, a state-operated psychiatric hospital located in northeastern San Bernardino. At a nearby warehouse on the eastern border of the city (near where the suspects engaged police in a gun battle), employees called police after hearing gunshots from the ongoing shootout and believing they were in danger.

After officers determined that those were false calls, key personnel from the SBPD, the SBCSD, and the FBI discussed the best course of action regarding each of the three scenes. Because it appeared the incident was likely to be related to terrorism, the law enforcement leadership team determined it would be best that the FBI processed the IRC and collected the evidence. Hence, the building was released to the FBI once it was tactically cleared by the SBCSD. The processing and evidence collection was done by FBI Evidence Response Team personnel in coordination with the SBCSD, who assisted by conducting 360-degree scans of the crime scene. However, the SBPD still served as the on-scene commander at the IRC facility until Friday afternoon, when the investigation was officially classified an act of terrorism. The SBCSD took the lead at the officer-involved shooting scene, and the FBI took the lead at the assailants' home in Redlands.

The officer-involved shooting scene

The male assailant's body had been handcuffed and was lying face down on the ground. The female assailant remained in the back seat and was believed to be dead—but authorities, aware that there could be explosive devices in the vehicle or on the suspects, took precautions to protect the community and themselves.

Several armored vehicles, belonging to the IVS team, responded to the shooting scene. One of the vehicles pushed up to the front of the SUV to ensure it was not going anywhere, and another did the same at the rear. Authorities discussed how to proceed. Someone suggested throwing a flash-bang grenade in the SUV to see if the female assailant was dead, but that idea was quickly quashed for fear of explosives.

Someone with the IVS team suggested using their relatively new piece of equipment—the Rook, a motorized battering ram with a protective shield—which would allow officers to get close and see inside the SUV.

⁷⁵ "Swatting" is the act of deceiving law enforcement agencies with fake emergency calls.



A Rook armored vehicle

Photo: Inland Valley SWAT

Standing in the payload of the Rook, a SWAT officer used a probe to see if the female assailant was still alive in the SUV. It quickly became apparent she was dead. The Rook's probe was then used to pull the female assailant's body out of the SUV and onto the street.

At the same time, multiple teams of officers scoured the neighborhood. Because the original call at the IRC suggested there were as many as three shooters, authorities wanted to be sure a third suspect had not escaped. Compounding matters was a report of a man running from the scene who was detained, interviewed, and released after it was determined he was uninvolved in the terrorist attack. Ultimately, authorities determined that there was not a third suspect.

Once the SUV and the area around it were determined to be safe, SBCSD investigators went to work processing the crime scene. The integrity of the crime scene was disrupted by the need to quickly search the assailants and the inside of the SUV to ensure no explosive devices were present.

At the same time, agents from several different federal agencies arrived with specific tasks that did not fit in with traditional homicide investigations. An agent from one of the federal agencies began examining the guns prior to the arrival of homicide investigators. Each shooter had a .223-caliber rifle and a 9-mm handgun. The male assailant's rifle had been modified in an attempt to make it fully automatic, but because it was handmade and done poorly, authorities determined it was at best semiautomatic. Another agent came to collect the electronics, consisting of a cell phone, a tablet, and an MP3 player.

It became frustrating for some of the local investigators who were still in the initial stages of the officer involved shooting investigation. “There was no point of contact on the federal side,” a sheriff’s homicide investigator said. “We kept getting waves of agents. Some of them were helpful. But some were asking for things they had already gotten.” Eventually, after conversations with the involved agencies’ leadership, supervisors at the scene had an understanding of the agreed-upon roles each agency was to perform and the tasks associated with those roles.

As the investigators conducted their work, they determined the two shooters had fired at least 81 shots at police officers. The investigators found an additional 1,879 rounds of .223 ammunition and another 484 rounds of 9-mm ammunition inside the SUV. Some of the rounds were in an ammunition canister while still more were in a black backpack. They also discovered that the assailants had taped ammunition magazines together to make switching them out easier. Inside the SUV, investigators also found what they believed was the trigger apparatus intended to be used to detonate the secondary devices found at the IRC.

The shooters had medical supplies in a blue backpack. These supplies consisted of ibuprofen pills and several quick-clot agents including tourniquets, emergency bandages used for traumatic wounds, and even adult diapers possibly to act as absorbing bandages. They were not wearing body armor. They wore all black clothing, including ski masks, and load-bearing vests. They both wore Airsoft neck guards—used to stop plastic pellets in a military simulation game—which was curious because that equipment would have done nothing to stop bullets.

Their bodies were transferred to the morgue. The male assailant had 25 wounds, most of which were to his legs. He also sustained a gunshot wound to his chin that fragmented into his neck. The female assailant sustained two shots to the head and 13 others to her body.

The coroner: Investigation and notifications

With the investigation underway and the secondary explosive devices rendered safe, the coroner’s office began the slow and methodical work of removing the deceased victims from the IRC. In the meantime, coroner’s officials visited the scene and then the Hernandez Center. Then they returned for a staff meeting. All employees’ days off were canceled and staff were put on 12-hour shifts to work around the clock.

Officials also determined that the Hernandez Center was the wrong place to make death notifications for family members because of the number of witnesses, their family members, and the media. They chose a Hampton Inn in the northeast corner of the city, far from downtown. The lack of media presence allowed coroner’s officials a more private place to make the notifications.

“A lot of people weren’t leaving,” a captain from the coroner’s office observed. “At some point, they began to realize there weren’t going to be more buses. We needed people there to help when the families realized that the rest of the victims weren’t coming on a bus. We began meeting with them and letting them know that their loved ones might be gone.”

Eventually, victims’ bodies were carefully moved to the coroner’s office, which was handled by staff, not the usual transport companies that the coroner’s office uses. This was another decision made by coroner’s officials who felt it was the right thing to do. That task was not complete until late into the following day.

The San Bernardino Coroner’s office made all notifications to victims’ families in person. However, some family members were frustrated and angry that it took so long to be notified. According to the captain assigned to the coroner’s office, “They were already expecting it. They were already prepped for it. They just needed to know.” The captain explained that the coroner’s division policy is being reviewed to improve their notification protocols and to ensure consistency with best practices.

All of the victims’ autopsies were completed by December 7. The assailants’ autopsies were conducted on December 8. Their bodies were released to family members, who had them buried in an undisclosed location.

“They were already expecting it. They were already prepped for it. They just needed to know.”

The media frenzy

On December 4, one day after the FBI finished its investigation of the Redlands home rented by the assailants, the older couple who owned the home were contacted by a media organization about gaining access to the house. Although the owners originally agreed, they were unaware of the scores of other media organizations this would draw. On the day that they allowed the one specific organization access, scores of other media overwhelmed the couple and entered the home with cameras and microphones without permission, some even broadcasting live from the home. With the help of the Redlands Police Department, the couple had all of the media removed, but not before the media had taken over, leaving the homeowners feeling vulnerable and violated.

The aftermath

In the days that followed, the investigation continued. Multiple press conferences were held, first led by Chief Burguan but then taken over by Assistant Director Bowdich⁷⁶ and the FBI once the attack was determined to be an act of terrorism.

That first night, all 24 law enforcement members who fired their weapons during the officer-involved shooting were interviewed at the sheriff's headquarters. Members of the counseling team were on hand, ready to talk to anyone who needed it.

Mental health counseling was offered in varying degrees in all of the local agencies that were involved in the case. Some departments made it mandatory for everyone involved; others made it voluntary for officers who fired their weapons or spent time inside the IRC.

Dr. Bohl-Penrod said the law enforcement community in general must realize it has to do more for its own people. Too often, she said, seeking therapy continues to carry a stigma for too many police officers. "If you tell them to go, then it's not them needing to go," Bohl-Penrod said, as she described some of the officers' later issues, including one officer who struggled to even look at a Christmas tree because it brought back memories of three dead victims found next to the tree in the conference room. An employee from one of the involved police agencies told the Police Foundation (PF) team that he would tease any coworker for attending a mental health debriefing, which points to the negative culture that remains in many law enforcement agencies regarding mental health services. A police supervisor who entered the IRC said, "It's almost seen as a 'badge of discouragement' if you speak out and have problems. We need to show some degree of empathy for these people."

Local officials organized a variety of vigils in the days and weeks that followed. Often, officers who were heavily involved in the case attended and had the opportunity to talk with survivors. Sometimes, there were just hugs exchanged. "People have seen things they just should never have to see," an SBPD officer said. "Cops, victims, all of us. There's definitely some help that comes with those times. But this is something that won't leave anyone who was part of it. Ever."

⁷⁶ Assistant Director Bowdich was appointed Associate Deputy Director of the FBI by Director James Comey in February 2016.

Timeline

The following timeline was provided in internal documents to the PF team by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD). All times are Pacific Standard Time.

- 10:58 a.m. First report of five rounds heard in the 1300 block of S. Waterman Ave.
- 10:59 a.m. Report of three suspects armed with assault rifles wearing all black clothing.
- 11:00 a.m. Two patrol units dispatched.
- 11:04 a.m. First unit arrives on scene (Lieutenant Mike Madden).
- 11:06 a.m. Lieutenant, detective, motor, and patrol officer form a contact team and make entry.
- 11:09 a.m. San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD) special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team arrives with twelve operators and a tactical medic (six more arrive later).
- 11:15 a.m. Triage area established at S. Park Center and Waterman Ave.
- 11:17 a.m. First floor secured. Patient evacuation to triage area.
- 11:26 a.m. Roof cleared.
- 11:30 a.m. Directed Probation to set up containment area for those exiting Bldg. #1.
- 11:31 a.m. Secondary sweep of building.
- 11:33 a.m. Possible device found on 2nd floor office (roller luggage bag out of place).
- 11:46 a.m. SBCSD Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) on scene.
- 11:51 a.m. EOD determined device was suspicious.
- 11:56 a.m. SBCSD Special Enforcement Division (SED) cleared Bldg. #1.
- 12:24 p.m. Inland Valley Regional SWAT (IVS) team to 2nd floor of Bldg. #1 to clear and evacuate.

12:38 p.m. Unified tactical command post established with SBPD, SBCSD, and Inland Valley SWAT team. The FBI joined later but was on standby to assist if needed at other locations.

1:42 p.m. Robot deployed to X-ray suspicious package.

2:22 p.m. X-ray complete, device deemed safe.

2:35 p.m. SBCSD completes search and evacuation of Bldgs. #1 & #2.

3:02 p.m. Redlands Police Department in 100mph pursuit of unrelated stolen car that terminates 1/2 mile from command post.

3:02:17 p.m. SBPD narcotic unit flagged down Redlands Police Department sergeant.

3:08:19 p.m. SBPD narcotics and Redlands Police Department following suspect vehicle eastbound between San Bernardino Avenue and Richardson.

3:08:43 p.m. Shots fired while officers attempt to stop suspect vehicle.

3:09 p.m. Suspect in custody from the Redlands Police Department stolen vehicle pursuit (Orange Show Rd. and Arrowhead).

3:09:22 p.m. Suspects stop and gun battle ensues (1795 E. San Bernardino Ave.).

3:12 p.m. Bearcat (armored vehicle) requested.

3:12:57 p.m. ***Officer Down *** Narcotics officer shot in left thigh with .223 round @ corner of Shedden and San Bernardino.

3:14:53 p.m. Shooting stops.

3:19 p.m. SED units searching for potential third suspect seen running from the area of the SUV.

3:19 p.m. Bearcat on scene.

5:08 p.m. Explosive devices located on 1st floor primary building.

7:36 p.m. Device removed for destruction.

7:54 p.m. Device #1 detonated / rendered safe.

8:33 p.m. Device #2 detonated / rendered safe.

8:37 p.m. Device #3 detonated / rendered safe.

9:29 p.m. Building clear and released to investigators.

Section III. Analysis and Lessons Learned

4. Leadership

Leadership—both internal and public-facing—in any crisis is critical to reducing chaos. Leadership requires bringing a sense of order through composed and experienced decision making, in many cases based upon limited and constantly evolving data and information. The shooting at the Inland Regional Center (IRC) was a mass casualty terrorist event with secondary devices and an alleged continuing assault plan by the suspects, a search for the suspects, and a public shootout. The leadership necessary to manage even the smallest components of these events was critical not only to eliminating the threat but also to preventing additional casualties, informing the public, reducing fear in the community, and restoring calm. Many people, regardless of rank or position, assumed leadership roles during the events as they unfolded and in the days and weeks that followed.

Examples of leadership can be seen throughout the narrative describing the events of December 2, 2015, and the days that followed. Based on information gathered through interviews of those present at the IRC that day, the Police Foundation (PF) team identified trust, critical incident debriefs, organizational awareness, teamwork, and managing elected officials as leadership skills that enhanced the response to the shooting at the IRC.

Trust

Throughout the review, many examples of how previously established work relationships revealed themselves as key to the public safety response to the IRC. Trust developed over time through shared operational experiences, commitments to regionalized training, and the resulting personal connections that were established before the incidents at the IRC demonstrated the close working relationships that existed among public safety agencies in the region. Trust by its nature improves collaboration as was seen within the executive leadership at the unified command post.

Previous critical incident debriefs and reports

Law enforcement executives credited their well-established relationships with incident command, inter-agency collaboration, and media relations at the IRC. The executives commented on lessons learned from other critical incidents, including the Christopher Dorner incident review⁷⁷ and their ability to apply those lessons during this incident. Law enforcement leaders recognized the need for expanded relationships with fire, emergency medical services (EMS), and emergency management officials going forward.

The critical incident reviews helped public safety officials recognize the need for more regional inter-agency and interdisciplinary active shooter and mass casualty training. Law enforcement leaders emphasized the need to engage fire and EMS agencies in the planning, training, and exercise process. It was also noted that law enforcement specifically needed more training in the incident command system (ICS) and needed to practice ICS principles on a regular basis and during routine operations.

Some law enforcement leaders suggested creating a regional law enforcement ICS response team similar to the regional fire service team. There was also considerable discussion regarding the need for unified command and command post training to ensure interagency communication and coordination of efforts. The InterAgency Board (IAB) recommends that all-hazards standing committees be established in local jurisdictions and communities and be “responsible for integrating responder assets, organizations, and disciplines to include active shooter / hostile events. Such a committee should include representation from local, state and federal law enforcement; jurisdictional and county EMS; local fire and rescue; local and state emergency management; and local 911, public safety answering point (PSAP), dispatch, and communication.”⁷⁸

The InterAgency Board

Sanctioned by the Attorney General of the United States, the InterAgency Board (IAB) was founded in 1998 by the U.S. Department of Defense’s Consequence Management Program Integration Office and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Federal Bureau of Investigation Weapons of Mass Destruction Countermeasures. The mission of the IAB is to strengthen the nation’s ability to prepare for and respond safely and effectively to emergencies, disasters, and chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosive (CBRNE) incidents.

⁷⁷ The level of cooperation and collaboration between agency leadership greatly improved the overall outcome of the response and investigation in the Dorner review. *Police Under Attack* (see note 1).

⁷⁸ *Improving Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response: Best Practices and Recommendations for Integrating Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS* (Arlington, VA: The InterAgency Board, 2015), 9, <http://www.interagencyboard.org/sites/default/files/publications/External%20IAB%20Active%20Shooter%20Summit%20Report.pdf>.

At the agency level, agencies use after action reports (AAR) to learn from incidents internally—identifying both what worked and what did not. For example, the San Bernardino City Unified School District conducted almost 100 AARs regarding the response to the active shooter or other hostile event from their facilities and personnel all over the city. As part of this review, the PF analyzed the AARs. Results can be found in appendix B of this report.

Organizational awareness

The team observed varying degrees of organizational awareness as it related to the emotional support of employees involved in responding to the terrorist attacks. However, the majority of leaders involved in the incident demonstrated a sincere concern for first responders and victims. These leaders did everything from providing peer support to offering private and public recognition of the difficulty experienced by responders to requiring counseling.

Literature on the subject supports the importance of this approach. Pillar six of the *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing* states, “Support for wellness and safety should permeate all practices and be expressed through changes in procedures, requirements, attitudes, and behaviors. An agency work environment in which officers do not feel they are respected, supported, or treated fairly is one of the most common sources of stress.”⁷⁹

It is critical that leaders remain focused on the needs of their employees and their community members, and avoid being distracted by the ever-present media attention or the potential for future litigation. Some personnel interviewed shared their frustration with how leadership appeared to be more concerned about media attention or litigation than about the resiliency and welfare of the employees or victims affected by the incident. By seeming to place media attention and potential litigation above the needs and concerns of victims and responders, leaders can run the risk of losing credibility and legitimacy within their organizations and possibly with the community.

Officers suffer high levels of stress every day, including difficult and even hostile work environments and individuals, responding to tragic events, and coming under fire themselves, but the most acute stress “often comes from their agencies, because of confusing messages or nonsupportive management.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report* (see note 4), 62.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

“Research suggests that people are more resilient when agency officers are able to support each other, and they know that agency leaders care about their well-being.”⁸¹ For this reason, Usher and colleagues recommend that leaders take a personal interest in officer wellness and be present and visible for officers after a critical incident to enhance resilience within the department.⁸²

Teamwork

Successful response to any critical incident is not determined solely by the leader or leadership acting alone but rather by assembling a team that can work effectively and efficiently. Ideally, these teams should be created prior to a critical incident, but as demonstrated at the IRC, there are many examples of successful ad hoc teams that form out of necessity. For example, an ad hoc team formed to staff the Joint Information Center (JIC) at the IRC. The JIC included staff from all of the law enforcement agencies involved in the response and personnel of different ranks including civilian employees. Team members, regardless of rank, were included by the executive leaders and encouraged to share their perspectives as the team discussed many aspects of the response and investigation. The idea was that the more diverse the team, the better the outcome, which was to inform the public in a manner that was timely, accurate, and as thorough as possible. To accomplish this, the executive leaders included everyone in crafting and communicating the message.

Managing elected officials

In interviews with public safety personnel and local elected officials, it was clear that some elected officials did not clearly understand their roles while others seemed too concerned about being interviewed by the media. As one local elected official pointed out, “Politicians from outside the area were out to further their political cause and get camera time. Why can’t we just let them bury their loved ones? Everything political takes away from the victims.” Several local officials noted that they believed their role was to help calm the community, to assist in ensuring factual information was provided to the community, to ensure resources were available to the responders and victims, and to allow law enforcement to do their job.

It is critical that leaders remain focused on the needs of their employees.

⁸¹ Laura Usher et al. *Preparing for the Unimaginable: How Chiefs Can Safeguard Officer Mental Health Before and After Mass Casualty Events* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2016), <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P347>.

⁸² Ibid.

Leadership lessons learned

Leadership during the San Bernardino terrorist incident set the stage for the response to the attacks. Less obvious was that the leaders also set the foundation for the aftermath of the incident, including how well their departments and their community will recover and respond to future events.

Ensure equity in care for department personnel and victim wellness

4.1 Organizational leadership should ensure that all involved in the response feel valued and are provided access to the physical and mental health resources they may need after a critical incident. Agencies should identify best practices related to employee wellness.

The team heard from responders and in some situations personally observed a wide range of leadership responses to employee welfare from mandatory counseling visits for all employees involved in the response to the IRC to casual mention but no requirement of services. The recommended leadership response is best illustrated when a department leader preparing for a review team group interview reminded first responders of the importance of employee welfare and the availability of peer support and mental health providers. During the interview, team members observed employees struggling emotionally as they described the events at the IRC. A supervisor in the room also took note and requested the assistance of mental health providers who arrived before the interviews concluded.

In a recently released report from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), experts make clear that addressing officer mental health before, during, and after a mass casualty incident is imperative.⁸³ In addition, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) recommends having “an established, vetted protocol to address mental wellness policies after critical incidents.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Breaking the Silence on Law Enforcement Suicides: IACP National Symposium on Law Enforcement Officer Suicide and Mental Health* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014), 15, <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P281>.

Leverage lessons learned

4.2 Regularly review the lessons learned from critical incidents with regional first responders and develop trainings that incorporate lessons and promising practices.

The PF team heard from first responders representing a variety of organizations that the ability to self-reflect and learn from the critical incident review done in 2013–2014 following the events precipitated by Dorner was critical to the success of the response to the December 2 terrorist shooting. The ability to learn, adapt, and improve based on prior events and past experience assisted the agencies involved in controlling the chaos and improving response performance.

Be inclusive

4.3 Include representatives from all levels of the organization in critical decisions to enhance outcomes.

“When people come together from different disciplines and backgrounds, there is a cross-fertilization of ideas that often leads to better solutions. Furthermore, by interacting with a more diverse group of professionals, police can establish a valuable network of contacts whose knowledge and skills differ from but complement their own.”⁸⁵ The San Bernardino Unified Command Center allowed a variety of ranks and civilian employees to participate in critical decision-making conversations ranging from tactical assignments to media strategy. The variety of thought and experience improved the outcomes without slowing the process.

“People acting together as a group can accomplish things which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring about.”
— President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

⁸⁵ President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report* (see note 4), 55.

Define roles and responsibilities for elected officials

4.4 Predetermine elected officials' roles and responsibilities in managing critical incidents, and include them in critical incident training and exercises.

Elected officials will and should respond to critical incidents in their communities. They play an important role in providing leadership and a sense of calm to their citizens. However, it is important that those elected officials understand the roles and responsibilities that will be helpful in bringing resolution to the incident and what actions they take that could hinder progress and healing.

Stay grounded

4.5 The intense media coverage associated with a high-profile event is often overwhelming and will place additional demands on leaders that may take them away from daily operations. These demands will continue long after the conclusion of the incident, requiring leaders to constantly assess the effects the increased attention and notoriety bring on themselves and the organization.

Publicly recognize collaboration

4.6 Publicly demonstrate and recognize the collaboration and support from others.

In San Bernardino, the chief of police, the sheriff, and the FBI assistant director stood together at all press conferences. They also included other public safety leaders and first responders in media briefings as a symbol of the trust that had been established prior to and during the event.

5. Command and Control

A coordinated and collaborative command and control strategy is critical to a response and resolution of complicated multijurisdictional incidents. The public safety response to the San Bernardino terrorist attacks demonstrates the importance of command and control in accomplishing several different missions across multiple disciplines and agencies.

This review examines the challenges associated with maintaining command and control as responding agencies were thrust into a chaotic terrorist attack that included multiple casualties and sites, secondary devices, and an aggressive search for the suspects that concluded with an extensive gun battle killing both terrorists.

The findings affirm the more significant issues of collaboration across public safety disciplines and jurisdictional authority and the implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS)⁸⁶ and California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid System.⁸⁷ NIMS is a “systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work together seamlessly and manage incidents involving all threats and hazards,” including the response to the IRC shooting, investigation, and search for the responsible suspects.⁸⁸ Emergency responders use different components of NIMS to conduct operations so that responders at all levels can work together more effectively and efficiently. Incidents such as this draw a response of many law enforcement agencies, fire departments, medical transport agencies, and emergency medical facilities. The ability to respond in a coordinated manner does not happen by accident but is a product of a regionwide commitment to NIMS and the requisite preparation and training.

In reviewing command and control issues, the team identified two overarching categories of focus: (1) incident command, including the use of command posts, and (2) self-deployment.

⁸⁶ The National Incident Management System is currently being revised to reflect and incorporate promising practices and lessons learned, changes in national policy, and updates to the National Preparedness System. More information about the revision and the most recent draft can be found at “Documents Available for National Engagement,” Federal Emergency Management Agency, last modified May 11, 2016, <https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system/national-engagement>.

⁸⁷ Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, “Mutual Aid System,” State of California, accessed June 21, 2016, <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/law-enforcement/mutual-aid-system>.

⁸⁸ “National Incident Management System,” Federal Emergency Management Agency, last modified May 11, 2016, <http://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system>.

Incident command and command posts

The lessons learned from the 2013 report *Police Under Attack: Southern California Law Enforcement Response to the Attacks by Christopher Dorner*⁸⁹ played a critical role in reducing or eliminating errors that may have occurred in the response to the December 2 terrorist attack. According to many law enforcement leaders in San Bernardino County, the ability to review and critique the response greatly prepared them for an improved response to the Inland Regional Center (IRC) shooting. The use of incident command, while not as robust and timely as many first responders would have hoped, was nonetheless significantly improved from the 2013 Dorner response.

During the initial response to reports of an active shooter at the IRC, leadership fell to the first on-scene personnel, which included a lieutenant from the San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD). As additional personnel from a variety of agencies began arriving, incident command unintentionally became decentralized as law enforcement first responders rushed in to locate the suspects, secure the scene, and rescue victims. While an initial command structure was established within eight minutes, not until the arrival of other public safety leaders with enhanced experience in incident command did the formalized unified incident command leadership structure emerge.

It is critical to note that while law enforcement personnel were securing the scene, San Bernardino Fire Department (SBFD) responders were waiting for a “safe to enter” notification. During this time, the SBFD was predesignating roles and responsibilities within the Incident Command System (ICS) to responding fire personnel. When they received notification, incident command roles and responsibilities were already clearly delineated.

The Police Foundation (PF) team noted that as the incident continued to evolve, unified incident command became more evident and coordination between emergency responders greatly improved.

Self-deployment

As noted in previous critical incident reviews,⁹⁰ basic law enforcement training teaches officers to handle situations on their own or in pairs. They are trained to seek opportunities to perform the tasks assigned to them and self-initiate in the interest of public safety. Agencies measure and evaluate officers in part based on self-initiated activity. “Self-initiated” activity is the response to a situation witnessed by an officer or in response to a scene where the officer may take immediate action to assist in an evolving, ongoing incident. “Self-deployment” is the independent action of an individual or individuals to an incident without the ability to immediately intervene in an ongoing situation or without a request from the jurisdiction in command.

⁸⁹ *Police Under Attack* (see note 1).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

The initial response to the IRC involved many law enforcement officers from several different agencies. While the number of law enforcement personnel was overwhelming,⁹¹ it was justified at the time given the scope of the incident, the limited information about the suspects and their location, the numbers of wounded victims, and the size of the IRC complex. While most of the officers on scene were not formally dispatched, their response was not considered self-deployment. For example, officers who were not SBPD members were driving through the city and responded when they noticed the unusual flight behavior of a San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD) helicopter. These officers were part of the second team to enter the building when they were able to determine that the helicopter was over the IRC and the SBPD was responding to an active shooter.

While the number of officers who initially responded to the IRC was necessary, the manner in which they responded lacked coordination, adding to an already chaotic scene. Many officers were not in uniform, and many were driving unmarked vehicles. In addition, there was limited appreciation of the consequences of unattended police vehicles blocking access routes to critical responding personnel such as tactical units, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS). The duties of monitoring traffic and keeping lanes of traffic open fell to a few officers who took command of the parking situation. In many cases, the routes were blocked with no way to quickly locate the driver. This led to delays in response of critical tactical assets.

As information developed regarding the identities of the possible suspects, the urgency to capture the suspects and the resulting shootout contributed to more individuals self-deploying. Numerous officers took independent actions in an attempt to locate the suspects. Some officers left preassigned positions at or near the IRC without notifying incident command and responded without adequate situational awareness. The uncontrolled numbers of officers responding and lack of parking discipline again caused roads to be blocked and resulted in a delay of critical tactical assets being available during the officer-involved shooting. In addition, many of the responding officers arrived at the shooting scene after the shooting had stopped.

The different teams working independently and without secure interagency radio communication capability created a lack of coordination between agencies. This lack of situational awareness among responding officers resulted in a patrol sergeant driving the wrong way against traffic and stopping nearly parallel to the suspects, who were waiting at a red light. It appears that through this action, the patrol sergeant alerted the suspects to a police presence. This alert prompted the suspects to don tactical vests and control how they were going to engage officers. Further complicating limited command and control in the search for the suspects was the need to surveil the suspects and limit radio traffic. When the suspects were finally located, the absence of prior communication with responding officers resulted in limited coordination, no tactical prestaging of personnel and equipment, and an absence of pre-vehicle stop planning.

⁹¹ A list and description of all responding agencies can be found in chapter 1 of this report.

While many of the officers who responded were necessary to contain the suspects and rescue wounded and trapped officers, a greater number of officers was not needed and impaired the access of necessary personnel and equipment. Individuals interviewed by the PF team believed that some officers from remote locations of San Bernardino County as well as those outside San Bernardino County responded merely to say that they were there.

Command and control lessons learned

The public safety response to the San Bernardino terrorist attacks demonstrates the use of command and control in accomplishing several different missions across multiple disciplines and agencies.

Conduct, review, and use lessons learned

5.1 Agencies should routinely examine critical incident reviews and plan at a regional level for the possibility of similar events.

The review of previous critical incidents—such as the attacks by Dornier—greatly improved the response by San Bernardino area law enforcement to the IRC. Even after the December 2 attack, organizations like the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) conducted after action reviews, which will provide them with valuable information for improving their response to critical incidents in the future.⁹²

Identify ways to incorporate ICS into daily operations

5.2 Agencies should use ICS beyond large-scale tactical events and incorporate as many of the principles as possible in response to routine emergencies so it becomes a regular component of a department's operating philosophy.⁹³

The fire service can serve as a model of how the routine use of ICS and NIMS greatly improves performance during critical incidents. In critical incidents, particularly events involving multiple jurisdictions, the understanding and use of NIMS is essential to the successful sharing of information and coordination of resources, investigations, and tactics.

⁹² An analysis of SBCUSD Police Department after action reports are included in this report as appendix B.

⁹³ Bruce Martin, "Active Shooter: Who's in Command—You Or the System?" Homeland Security (blog of a public safety leader, HLS collaborator, and educator), July 6, 2014, <https://medium.com/homeland-security/active-shooter-whos-in-command-51c3f13c1987#.a3jelfwuw>.

Regularly organize, plan, and exercise unified command

5.3 Regional public safety partners should plan and exercise unified command for complex incidents on a regular basis. This includes law enforcement, fire, EMS, and emergency management as well as other government and nongovernment agencies as appropriate.

The SBCUSD Police Department, in coordination with the SBPD and the SBF, conducted an active shooter drill in 2013 that tested the core capabilities of unified command, victim extraction, and triage and “medical-surge” at area hospitals. Other law enforcement agencies and fire departments discussed regional active shooter drills that had been conducted as well as the benefits of interdisciplinary cross training. Officers previously unknown to one another worked effectively as the initial responders because of these regional training efforts.

5.4 As soon as possible and practical during an incident, establish a unified command of all primary first responders to facilitate communication, situational awareness, operational coordination, allocation of resources, and delivery of services.

As observed in San Bernardino, agencies with established relationships demonstrated improved collaboration and understanding of others’ abilities and limitations. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identifies pre-existing relationships as critical to emergency coordination and response. When prior relationships exist, collaboration improves and the resulting outcomes are enhanced.⁹⁴

Designate a staging area manager

5.5 After adequate personnel are on scene, additional personnel should be directed to staging areas for assignment of duties. As described in a variety of NIMS courses,⁹⁵ designating a staging area manager is critical during the early moments of the response.⁹⁶

Agencies should consider the need for more than one staging area depending on the size and scope of the operation and ensure communication between leadership at different staging areas. For example, separate staging areas may be required to facilitate tactical units or aircraft.

⁹⁴ See U.S. Fire Administration, *Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department Operational Considerations and Guide for Active Shooter and Mass Casualty Incidents* (Washington, DC: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2013), 3, https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/active_shooter_guide.pdf.

⁹⁵ Emergency Management Institute, “National Incident Management System (NIMS),” Federal Emergency Management Agency, accessed June 22, 2016, <https://training.fema.gov/nims/>.

⁹⁶ The NIMS Staging Manager Checklist is a good starting point for personnel assigned to staging manager duties. *Staging Area Manager Position Checklist* (Washington, DC: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2012), https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/assets/sam_pcl.pdf.

Expect and manage the chaos

5.6 Agencies must plan for potential chaos created by public safety personnel responding to an active shooter.

An active shooter incident is by its very nature chaotic. The manner in which public safety personnel respond can add to or reduce the level of chaos. Undisciplined responses can gather momentum to create additional chaos. To avoid this, personnel should be provided with the right information to improve situational awareness, and self-deployment should not be left unchecked.

5.7 Agencies should anticipate and plan a timely transition from the somewhat chaotic active shooter response to a more methodical search for possible suspects, triage of victims, and victim and witness extrication.

Evaluate security of command post location

5.8 Responders should constantly evaluate security risks of command post locations and make appropriate adjustments as required.

Initial command post locations may inadvertently be located in an area later determined to be at risk for secondary devices or attacks.

5.9 Send pictures or maps of the area—building layouts, parking lots, streets, and the like—to dispatch and vehicle mobile data terminals (MDT). Employ technology, such as such as helicopters, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), or pre-existing camera systems (as available) to produce information in real time.

Providing as much contextual information as possible to dispatch and MDTs provides officers on the ground with additional information from which to operate.

An active shooter incident is by its very nature chaotic.

Self-deployment

5.10 It is the responsibility of each first responder to assess a situation while en route to an active shooter incident as well as after arriving to determine if they are needed as part of the response. If an officer has initiated action at a scene or been assigned a specific task the officer should not leave unless directed to do so.

It was reported to the PF team that many officers left the IRC and rushed to the shootout. This created uncertainty as to the completion of some tasks at the IRC and contributed to an already less-than-stable situation at the IRC and added to the chaos at the shootout scene.

5.11 Supervisors must anticipate the likelihood of unnecessary self-deployment and make efforts to discourage and restrict officer response.

Tactical teams responding to the shootout were slowed by the overwhelming response of officers to the scene.

5.12 Agencies must continually plan and evaluate ingress and egress routes during critical incidents. An incident safety officer should be designated as quickly as possible and pay particular attention to the access or egress of emergency vehicles. Ambulance and medical transport should be given a high priority task for police and fire incident command.

Officers parking cars across all accessible lanes continues to be problematic at critical incidents. This issue slows or even inhibits the ability for emergency vehicles to get close enough to the incident location to recover and transport victims or provide additional resources. This problem has been noted in a number of critical incident reviews, including the Dorner report, the report of the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shootings, the Stockton Heist report, and the Navy Yard shooter report.⁹⁷

In the San Bernardino response, as the number of law enforcement officers responding grew so did traffic congestion caused by officers abandoning their vehicles in the roadway without consideration of the effects on the need for ingress or egress. This same problem occurred later in the response to the shootout.

⁹⁷ *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting: After Action Report for the City of Aurora* (Arlington, VA: TriData Division, 2014), https://www.courts.state.co.us/Media/Opinion_Docs/14CV31595%20After%20Action%20Review%20Report%20Redacted.pdf; Rick Braziel, Devon Bell, and George Watson, *A Heist Gone Bad: A Police Foundation Critical Incident Review of the Stockton Police Response to the Bank of the West Robbery and Hostage Taking* (Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 2015), <http://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/A-Heist-Gone-Bad-Critical-Incident-Review.pdf>; *After Action Report Washington Navy Yard September 16, 2013: Internal Review of the Metropolitan Police Department Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: Metropolitan Police Department, 2014), <http://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Washington-Navy-Yard-After-Action-Report.pdf>; *Police Under Attack* (see note 1).

6. Planning and Response

Several themes emerged during discussions with first responders, fire and emergency medical services (EMS), medical personnel, and victims regarding the response to the Inland Regional Center (IRC) shooting and the officer-involved shooting. The majority of the issues can be categorized into five critical junctures in planning for and responding to the attacks: (1) training, (2) communications, (3) building search, (4) trauma care, and (5) equipment. These areas provide valuable lessons in ways in which public safety officers can prepare and execute response to their communities in mass casualty incidents.

Training

Active shooter training basics

The San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD) began its active shooter training in 2000 in the aftermath of the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado. The training was then presented during in-service training between 2007 and 2012. The department is currently updating the training curriculum to meet California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification requirements.

A review of the active shooter training outline and presentation revealed that the SBPD program was comprehensive and reflected best practices. The training covered the history of active shooter events, terrorist attacks, and other hostile events of significant impact. A review of these case studies set the framework for the active shooter training as well as an opportunity to discuss lessons learned from previous active shooter, terrorist, and other hostile events. The training materials describe police priorities when responding to active shooter or other hostile events, including the following:

- Capture or neutralize the suspect(s)
- Save lives in proximity of the shooter
- Save lives & ensure safety of citizens in the area
- Save lives & ensure safety of officers
- Contain the suspect(s)
- After event investigation

The training addressed the need to immediately form a three- to four-officer contact team and for the contact team to capture or neutralize the suspect or suspects, prevent the suspects' escape, continue past victims, continue past explosives, and communicate. Training drills were used so officers could practice team movement, the diamond formation, and entry tactics. Another area of focus was the rescue of injured civilians and officers. Officers were also advised that active shooter or other hostile events would be difficult venues in which to operate because of environmental factors, confusion, and victims' injuries and pleas for help.

It is clear that officers followed the lessons learned through in-service training during their response to the December 2 attacks. The first officers quickly formed a contact team and entered the IRC with the intention of capturing or neutralizing the shooters. They entered an extremely difficult operating environment with the fire alarm sounding, water gushing from a broken fire suppression line, smoke, the smell of gunpowder, and seriously injured victims begging for help. Despite these issues the contact team continued to follow their training, pursuing the goal of capturing or neutralizing the shooters.

The in-service training indicated that officers should equip themselves with ballistic helmets, vests, safety glasses, knee pads, and shoulder weapons. Some members of the initial contact team did not have vests or ballistic helmets with them, and only one officer had a shotgun. A number of SBPD officers reported that they were ill-equipped to respond to this incident as well as hostile events more generally; some believe this is because of budget constraints.

It should be noted that recent active shooter training had not addressed the transition from an active shooter or barricaded suspect event to a mass casualty incident. In addition, although the training did discuss victim rescue, it did not fully explore the role of a tactical rapid response or rescue team. Finally, the training did not discuss tactical emergency medical or trauma care. It should be noted that SBPD officers are not assigned personal tactical medical or trauma kits, but every unit has a trauma kit in the vehicle.

Active shooter training and the San Bernardino response

During interviews with the Police Foundation (PF) team, multiple members of the SBPD, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD), and Inland Valley Regional special weapons and tactics (SWAT) (IVS) teams commented on the value of previous interagency active shooter training. One officer remarked, "I just jumped into the formation with the SWAT guys, it was seamless." Another officer commented, "regional and realistic training was invaluable. Training came into play tenfold. We didn't have to think about how we should do it—we just did it."

The active shooter training that first responders received prior to the IRC shooting directly contributed to their ability to perform under the extreme conditions posed in this case. For example, the first officer on scene, an administrative lieutenant, immediately requested three additional officers; during his active shooter training, he had been taught the entry team should consist of four officers if possible, which prompted his request for three additional officers.

Active shooter training allowed the four initial officers to form up and enter the building to search for the shooter or shooters with minimal discussion of roles and responsibilities. While none of the original entry team members—the lieutenant, a motor officer, a patrol officer, and a detective—had ever trained together, they “gelled” immediately. Despite the fact that the shooting scene was extremely difficult because of the size of the IRC, the number of victims, and their injuries and pleas for help, the entry team pushed through the conference room and continued to search for the shooters as trained. One of the officers stated that “the [victims’] wounds were devastating” and that he and his colleagues “had never seen bodies torn up so badly.” Although the initial entry teams were trained to find and neutralize the shooters, many of them said that the hardest thing was moving past victims begging for help.

The SBPD’s SWAT team was conducting active shooter training at the time of the incident. Upon hearing of the shooting incident on their radios, the team deployed quickly to the IRC with their equipment, which provided a strong tactical presence at the scene. The SBPD SWAT team’s commanding officer had recently attended Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) at the ALERRT Center at Texas State University–San Marcos and advised that it was invaluable to the SWAT team’s response as well as in establishing tactical command.

Regional and realistic training was invaluable. Training came into play tenfold. We didn’t have to think about how we should do it—we just did it.

Active shooter training for civilians

Responding police officers and victims (specifically those employed at the IRC) commented on the impact of the civilian active shooter training that had been provided by the SBPD prior to the incident, especially the principles of “run, hide, fight.” Training materials for the public on surviving an active shooter event have been produced, including a video produced by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security entitled “Run. Hide. Fight. Surviving an Active Shooter Event.”⁹⁸ Police officers and deputies noted that in many instances, personnel quickly fled the conference room and the buildings upon recognizing the threat or hearing gunshots. Others barricaded themselves or hid in offices, conference rooms, or bathrooms. Victims acknowledged that they used the skills they had learned during the training. As previously noted, some of the shooting victims acknowledged that they survived the attack because they had attended active shooter training in the very conference room in which the attack occurred.

⁹⁸ Ready Houston, “RUN. HIDE. FIGHT. Surviving an Active Shooter Event—English,” YouTube, July 23, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0>; Office of Partner Engagement, “Video: Run. Hide. Fight. Surviving an Active Shooter Event,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed June 22, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-incidents/run-hide-fight-video>.

Many of the victims and law enforcement officers advised that active shooter training should not be a surprise. In fact, some first responders initially believed the shooting was a training event, and many of the victims believed the shooters were role players in a training exercise, which delayed their reactions to the real active shooter.

ALERRT Training

In 2002, Texas State University, the San Marcos (Texas) Police Department, and the Hays County (Texas) Sheriff's Office created the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center (ALERRT) at the university to address the need for active shooter response training for first responders. Developed after the 1999 tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado, the ALERRT curriculum has become a national standard in active shooter response training. In 2013, the Federal Bureau of Investigation partnered with the ALERRT Center and named ALERRT its standard for active shooter response training.

With federal and state grant funding, ALERRT has trained more than 80,000 law enforcement officers in dynamic, force-on-force scenario-based training in 49 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. ALERRT delivers training on site in cities around the country and offers advanced active shooter response training at a multimillion-dollar training facility in San Marcos. The ALERRT Center offers nine grant funded first responder courses, which include trainings on different levels of active shooter terrorism response tactics, breaching a crisis site, operating in low-light conditions, responding to an open-air active shooting, and responding to violent encounters while wearing plain clothes, as well as train-the-trainer courses for law enforcement officers to learn to teach fellow officers and civilians.

Source: "The National Standard," ALERRT, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://alerrt.org/page/about>.

Key training themes

Almost all first responders commented on the strong smell of gunpowder, the overwhelming noise of the fire alarm, and the fact that water was pouring out of a ruptured fire suppression supply line in the ceiling. They also commented on the physical and mental stress brought on by the extensive process of forcing doors open, confronting terrified and wounded victims, and searching three large buildings. As a result, law enforcement, fire, and EMS personnel emphasized the need for realistic physically and mentally challenging training.

Law enforcement, fire, and EMS personnel emphasized the need for active shooter training that did not end at the point at which the threat was neutralized but rather continued to consider victim extrication, triage, and treatment. The coroner's office recommended that its personnel participate in all aspects of training exercises and recommended that exercises consider the management of fatalities and post-incident investigations. All of the public safety officials interviewed stressed the importance of interagency training to build relationships, an understanding of operating protocols, and communication capabilities.

Communications

A strong sense of urgency enveloped the SBPD communications center as the first 911 calls were received and the initial police units were dispatched. As the volume of 911 calls and law enforcement activity increased, so did the load on the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. Dispatchers reported a noticeable lag in system responsiveness as the event grew, making their jobs more difficult.

Likewise, as the number of law enforcement personnel grew so did the volume of police radio traffic, thereby limiting the availability of radio broadcast time. Also complicating the flow of information was the number of radio channels being used. Some officers switched to SBPD frequencies while others decided to stay on the frequencies of their own agencies. Many law enforcement responders reported difficulty in determining the best radio channel to monitor to get the most accurate information about the situation. Officers also reported radio communication problems inside the building, which caused them to use cell phones as a way to report information or request additional resources.

Another communication issue encountered was that narcotics officers conducting covert surveillance did not feel comfortable using unencrypted communications to notify other relevant jurisdictions that they were doing so in their own jurisdiction. Officers were concerned that unencrypted channels could be monitored by civilians, the media, and possibly the suspects. The officers instead used their personal cell phones and push-to-talk capabilities and did not notify the police departments in whose jurisdictions they were operating. This meant that the police departments in those jurisdictions did not know that other law enforcement organizations were conducting surveillance in their area, which could have caused dangerous situations.

Nationwide, during critical events such as active shooter events, public voice, video, and data networks may become overwhelmed, causing them to run slowly or to crash. Currently, public safety agencies (police, fire, and EMS) do not have dedicated space on the national network, nor do they receive priority in the event of a critical incident. If volume overwhelms local or regional networks causing them to slow or crash, public safety communications can be silenced. The First Responder Network Authority (First

Net), created by the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012,⁹⁹ will be the first nationwide, high speed broadband network for voice, video, and data dedicated to public safety. Once implemented, it will avoid public use space on the public broadband network, which will keep public safety communications functioning.¹⁰⁰

Building search

As the officers searched each of the three IRC buildings, they encountered numerous locked doors and discovered that employees had barricaded themselves in locked offices, meeting spaces, and bathrooms. This slowed the search process and their ability to gain entry into locked rooms and hallways as well as delaying their ability to rescue barricaded employees. Law enforcement responders involved in the search of the IRC complex reported the need for a standardized system to identify and mark areas that had or had not been searched and were or were not secured. In addition, employees had been trained to barricade themselves as part of active shooter training. Employees were also instructed not to reveal themselves until they were convinced rescuers were actually law enforcement. With the shooters dressed similarly to tactical law enforcement personnel, victims and witnesses were apprehensive to leave their hiding spots. Other victims ran to law enforcement personnel, requiring weapons discipline and the ability to calm and organize victims to facilitate the extraction process.

One tactic used by quick-thinking responders was to grab electronic keycards and office keys from employees as they exited the building. This proved helpful, as the keycards had varying levels of permissions to enter different rooms. Ultimately, many doors required breaching—some of which were heavy fireproof doors that slowed down the process and fatigued search team members.

Trauma care

During interviews, several law enforcement officers commented that they were not adequately trained or equipped to provide emergency medical care to IRC shooting victims or wounded colleagues. For example, members of San Bernardino County Probation, with the assistance of other law enforcement and fire personnel, led the extrication of victims from the IRC. As one probation officer remarked, “I geared up and tried to give first aid, but our [first aid] kits were insufficient to treat the wounds.”

⁹⁹ Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, Pub.L. No. 112–96 (2012).

¹⁰⁰ First Responder Network Authority, “About FirstNet,” U.S. Department of Commerce, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.firstnet.gov/about>.

Law enforcement agencies nationwide provide basic trauma care and equipment for their officers. In October 2013, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) adopted a resolution at its annual conference in Philadelphia recommending

“that every law enforcement officer should receive tactical emergency medical training including critical core skills of early, life-threatening hemorrhage control and rapid evacuation of mass casualty victims to a casualty collection point. Tactical emergency medical skills are critical life-saving interventions in the officer-down situation, whether as officer applied self-aid or aid given to a fellow officer, or to victims of a mass casualty situation such as an active shooter or bombing event.”¹⁰¹

This recommendation was repeated in the *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing*, which states, “Every law enforcement officer should be provided with individual tactical first aid kits and training.”¹⁰² It goes on to state, “This would be a national adoption of the Hartford Consensus, which calls for agencies to adopt hemorrhage control as a core law enforcement skill and to integrate rescue/emergency medical services personnel into community-wide active shooter preparedness and training.”¹⁰³

While the primary goal of tactical emergency medical training is to assist wounded officers, the benefits of such training and equipment were demonstrated on January 8, 2011, in Tucson, Arizona, in which Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and several other people were shot. Lives were probably saved because responding Pima County Sheriffs’ Department deputies had tactical medical kits and training, which they used to treat some of the gunshot wounds. Following the Aurora, Colorado, movie theater shooting, tactical medical training and tactical medical kits were developed and distributed to Aurora police officers.¹⁰⁴ Other departments nationwide provide basic trauma care training and tactical emergency medical kits for their officers. For example, the Rochester (Minnesota) Police Department has developed an eight-hour basic tactical casualty care course modeled on the military’s combat lifesavers curriculum, which provides trauma equipment for its officers.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Police Physicians Section, “Tactical Emergency Medical Training for Law Enforcement Personnel: Adopted at the 120th Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 23, 2013,” International Association of Chiefs of Police, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.iacp.org/ViewResult?SearchID=2310>.

¹⁰² President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report* (see note 4), 66.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting* (see note 97), xiv.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew D. Sztajnkrzyer, Roger L. Peterson and Sarah L. Clayton, “Medical Tactics for Law Enforcement: Development of the Rochester (Minnesota) Police Department Basic Tactical Casualty Care (BTCC) Course,” *The Police Chief* 77, no. 12 (December 2010), 92–101, http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display_arch&article_id=2271&issue_id=122010.

Law enforcement and fire personnel held significant discussion regarding the best approach for victim triage, extrication, and treatment during active shooter and hostile events. In fact, a fire medic assigned to the SBPD SWAT team triaged victims inside the IRC, which significantly enhanced victim extrication and survival. The Rancho Cucamonga Fire Department's Rescue Task Force was deployed to the IRC and was on standby throughout the incident.

Safety Zones and Perimeters Defined

Hot zone. The area where a direct and immediate threat exists. A direct and immediate threat is very dynamic and is determined by the complexity and circumstances of the incident. Examples of direct and immediate threats are an active shooter, a barricaded suspect, a hostage situation, a high-risk warrant service, and possible terrorist acts. This could also be classified as the "inner perimeter" by law enforcement, an area within the range of active gunfire or secondary devices immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH). Law enforcement should also consider the area to be IDLH if they can visualize the shooter or determine a threat.

Warm zone. The area where a potential threat exists, but the threat is not direct or immediate. An example of this is an unknown location of suspects in a given area already cleared. Fire department resources may be requested to enter into warm zones, but this should only be done with force protection, with cover and concealment, or in accordance with local fire department policies. These instances could be used for rapid extraction of multiple victims or officers down who need immediate assistance. Prior to entering into a warm zone, a risk-versus-gain analysis should be completed. Law enforcement could also refer to the warm zone as part of the inner perimeter.

Cold zone. The area where no significant danger or threat can be reasonably anticipated. This could be achieved by distance, geographic location, or inaccessible areas from the incident. The cold zone is the location for staging of resources, the incident command post, and treatment and transportation of patients. This area could also be classified "outer perimeter" by law enforcement.

Source: FIRESCOPE, *Emergency Response to Tactical Law Enforcement Incidents* (Sacramento, CA: Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies, 2015,) http://www.firescope.org/meetings/bod/2015/bod_meeting3/documents/ics%20701.pdf.

The PF team reviewed policies and procedures developed by the Rancho Cucamonga Fire Department in collaboration with the SBCSD, which is considered a national model, as well as national best practices. The InterAgency Board, for example, recommends that municipalities “adopt the rescue task force concept as a multidisciplinary team that includes law enforcement protection as a method of quickly getting fire [and] EMS personnel to victims in an active shooter [or other] hostile event.”¹⁰⁶ The Rescue Task Force concept has also received support from the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA),¹⁰⁷ the International Association of Fire Fighters,¹⁰⁸ and the U.S. Fire Administration.¹⁰⁹

Trauma Center Response

Upon receiving notice of the Inland Regional Center active shooter incident, one of the region’s primary trauma centers reacted quickly by immediately setting up 10 trauma teams to treat incoming victims. The trauma teams were aided by medical residents present for a prearranged training day. This particular emergency room received six patients. The emergency room doctor interviewed by the Police Foundation team advised that “the people in the field did a very good job of triaging the victims as well as ensuring that they were unarmed.” The doctor further shared that the hospital conducts an annual EMS day with regional law enforcement, fire, and EMS departments to train for a mass casualty incident. The trauma center also conducts quarterly internal mass casualty drills.

¹⁰⁶ *Improving Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response* (see note 78), 16.

¹⁰⁷ “The National Tactical Officers Association recommends that special operations teams (SWAT, SERT [special emergency response team], etc.) include properly trained tactical emergency medical providers. The TEMS (tactical emergency medical support) providers are capable of developing medical threat assessments, implementing risk reduction strategies, providing logistical support, coordinating operations with local emergency medical services (EMS), and rendering immediate medical care within the tactical environment of a law enforcement operation.” Kevin Gerold, “TEMS Position Statement: Inclusion of Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS) in Tactical Law Enforcement Operations,” National Tactical Officers Association, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://ntoa.org/sections/tems/tems-position-statement/>.

¹⁰⁸ *IAFF Position Statement: Active Shooter Events* (Washington, DC: International Association of Fire Fighters, n.d.), http://www.acphd.org/media/372823/iaff_active_shooter_position_statement.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Fire Administration, *Fire/Emergency Medical Services Department Operational Considerations and Guide* (see note 94).

Fire and EMS personnel also credited their mass casualty training with the ability to quickly establish a casualty collection, triage, and treatment area. The mass casualty training allowed them to quickly coordinate with area hospitals through ReadyNet (the region's emergency room notification system) and direct calls to trauma centers. In fact, all injured victims were cleared from the casualty collection point located in the San Bernardino public golf course in a little more than 14 minutes.

Planning and preparation lessons learned

Law enforcement leaders and personnel in San Bernardino recognized the need to plan and train for a critical incident. Following the 2013 shootings by Christopher Dorner in Southern California,¹¹⁰ San Bernardino law enforcement leadership took lessons learned and began an ongoing process of training personnel to better respond to an active shooter.

Training

Regional training

6.1 Because initial responders to a critical incident may be from a variety of agencies, regional training improves performance in a crisis response and should include all disciplines and levels of first responders. Fire, EMS, and other potential first responders should be included in in-service active shooter training as appropriate.

The San Bernardino City Unified School District Police, in conjunction with other city departments, conducted an active shooter drill in 2013, which tested the core capabilities of unified command, victim extraction and triage, and medical surge at area hospitals. Other law enforcement agencies and fire departments discussed regional active shooter drills that had been conducted as well as the benefits of interdisciplinary cross training. Officers previously unknown to one another worked effectively as the initial responders because of these regional training efforts.

6.2 In-service training, regardless of the topic, should be updated on an annual basis and meet federal, state, and other appropriate certification standards.

It is important that in-service training be updated to ensure that response protocols taught to officers include the most updated standards and best practices.

¹¹⁰ *Police Under Attack* (see note 1).

Train for high stress situations

6.3 The ability to understand and apply response strategies in a high-stress environment improves performance. Training should attempt to create as much sensory deprivation or stimulus as possible to simulate real-world scenarios.

First responders entering the building encountered a barrage of stimuli that accosted all of their senses. They saw dead and wounded victims, heard screaming and moaning from victims, smelled the distinct odor of gunpowder, felt water pouring from the fire sprinkler system, experienced movement as injured and uninjured victims ran from the building, and heard and saw the wailing of an extremely loud fire alarm and strobe light system, all while experiencing a heightened level of fear because of the unknown status of the shooters and the possibility of other threats. This level of chaos can cause a high stress situation that affects officers' abilities to apply response strategies learned during training. This should be considered and perhaps even simulated during training.

6.4 First responders should be familiar with critical infrastructure as well as facilities that regularly bring large numbers of people together. Consideration should be given to reducing or eliminating environmental stressors if possible. Sound, darkness, and other environmental stressors can make it difficult to find and identify suspects and may hinder evacuations as well as search and rescue efforts.

Train for tactical emergency medical care

6.5 Law enforcement agencies should train all officers in tactical emergency medical care.

Both the IACP and the *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* recommend this as a standard part of training for all law enforcement officers.

Train to transition from active shooter to barricaded suspect

6.6 Active shooter training should include transition from a dynamic active shooter situation (a situation that is evolving very rapidly consistent with the suspect's actions) to a static situation (a situation that is not evolving or in motion because the suspect[s] is contained, has escaped, or is incapacitated). Training should recognize that active shooter incidents may evolve from dynamic to static situations and possibly back to dynamic or mass casualty situations requiring transitions over the course of the police response.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ "Response to Active Shooters," National Tactical Officers Association, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://www.muni.ri.net./middletown/vendor/ag1.ppt>.

In the San Bernardino attack, the shooting had stopped before the first contact team arrived at the IRC. However, the officers did not know this, and they actively searched for the shooters until they were entirely sure there were no active shooters still in the IRC. Although not the appropriate tactic in the IRC active shooter incident, some first responders interviewed remarked that they were so intent on finding the shooters that they did not transition from employing dynamic situation tactics to employing static situation tactics. Accordingly, it is recommended that general active shooter training include a block about transitioning tactics from those addressing a dynamic situation in which the suspect or suspects are causing immediate death or serious bodily injury to those used in a static incident in which the suspect or suspects might be barricaded in another area of the building.

Follow training through to notification of families

6.7 Training exercises should continue past the point where the threat no longer exists and extend to the notification of victims' families by the medical examiner or coroner.

Too often, training events stop after the shooters are located and the threat eliminated. This leaves first responders with a lack of knowledge and appreciation for how the entire response system functions and how their actions influence other steps of the process. Additional thought should be given to including clergy, mental health or crisis counselors, and victim advocates in training exercises as well as planning for family reunification and notification, victim interviews, and staging areas.

Prepare for secondary devices

6.8 Training should include secondary device identification, notification, and isolation.

As previously indicated, the use of secondary devices is a common practice among terrorists operating in various areas of the world. The primary intent of a secondary device is to kill or injure first responders during the post-incident investigation, at the command post, triage area, and so on. In this incident, it was believed that secondary devices were left in the conference room for the sole purpose of killing or injuring first responders once it was remotely detonated.

Civilian active shooter training

6.9 Civilian and private sector training for an active shooter event can save lives. Inform the public of appropriate measures to take if they are involved in an active shooter or other hostile event, and provide a general overview of the police response.

During the shooting at the IRC, employees within the complex followed training directives and found secure locations to barricade themselves. First responders should work with public, private, and not-for-profit employers to establish protocols and training for non-law enforcement personnel to prepare them to experience and survive an active shooter or other hostile event.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Houston (Texas) Police Department, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and a number of other departments have put out free instructional materials including videos, trainings, and literature for the public on what to do in an active shooter incident.¹¹² The key guidance to offer is as follows:

- Run, if you can.
- If you can't run, hide.
- If you can neither run nor hide, fight the shooter(s), preferably in concert with others.

Communications

“An essential need during any emergency is the ability of an agency to communicate both internally and with other agencies. With this requirement in mind, the problem of communications should be a priority in mutual aid planning before an incident occurs.”¹¹³

Dispatch systems

6.10 Communications centers should hold regular interdepartment interoperability communication drills with regional public safety agencies. Human and equipment communication issues should be identified and remedied during communication drills and joint exercises.

6.11 Dispatch centers should be included in incident command system (ICS) training, which should include testing public safety proficiency in using radio and other communication systems.

6.12 Because dispatch systems can quickly become overwhelmed in a mass casualty, active shooter, or other critical incident, agencies should develop a tactical dispatcher system that provides a dedicated dispatcher responsible for the operational needs of the incident and tactical commander.

¹¹² Ready Houston, “Regional Disaster Preparedness,” City of Houston Office of Public Safety, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.readyhouston.tx.gov/videos.html>; Ready Houston, “RUN. HIDE. FIGHT. Surviving an Active Shooter Event—English,” YouTube, July 23, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0>; Office of Partner Engagement, “Video: Run. Hide. Fight. Surviving an Active Shooter Event,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed June 22, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-incidents/run-hide-fight-video>; “Active Shooter Preparedness,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, last modified June 16, 2016, <https://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>.

¹¹³ Dacia Young and Dennis Beene, *Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Plan* (Mather, CA: Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, 2016), 21, <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/LawEnforcementSite/Documents/1Blue%20Book.pdf>.

6.13 Develop a system and protocols for diverting nonemergency calls elsewhere as well as establishing protocols to handle calls from family, friends, and media.

Area communications centers became inundated with phone calls many from on- and off-duty personnel asking if they were needed, family and friends of employees at the IRC, and the media.

6.14 During large-scale multiagency events, dispatch personnel should be colocated to facilitate information exchange and resource coordination and to compliment ICS.

6.15 CAD systems should be load tested to ensure the systems can handle a significant event lasting a long period of time.

6.16 Training exercises should simulate a system slowdown or shutdown during a crisis and describe alternative communication strategies and protocols.

Radio communication

6.17 Agencies should identify facilities within their communities that pose radio transmission and reception difficulties and use those facilities to train personnel and identify ways to mitigate poor communication so they are prepared should an incident occur.

Responding officers were not able to use their radios inside the IRC because of poor transmission and reception. Some cities require the installation of public safety repeaters in new construction and mandate retrofitting existing commercial and residential buildings to address building construction issues that negatively impact radio use.

FirstNet

The First Responder Authority Network (FirstNet) was created under federal law in 2012 to “build, operate and maintain the first high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network dedicated to public safety.” FirstNet will provide a resilient and redundant network that can be shared by police officers, firefighters, paramedics, and other public safety and support personnel to ensure interoperability during the response to a critical incident.

Source: First Responder Network Authority, “Guiding Principles,” U.S. Department of Commerce, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.firstnet.gov/about/guiding-principles>. FirstNet was also the focal point of recommendation 3.7 of the *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (see note 4).

6.18 Agencies must reinforce radio discipline. Merely increasing radio capacity alone does not reduce the volume nor does it establish a priority of communication. It is an officer's responsibility based upon training and agency policy to differentiate between critical radio communication and less critical communication that does not need to be broadcast.

Police radio traffic became overwhelmed, and officers most in need of a clear channel were not able to obtain it because the response was so large.

6.19 Additional consideration should be given to merged radio systems and protocols between law enforcement, fire, and EMS.

6.20 The ability to communicate using encrypted channels improves communication without jeopardizing officer and community safety.

Officers responsible for covert surveillance of potential suspect locations expressed concern that discussing locations or tactics via unencrypted radio systems put themselves and the public at risk. The officers instead used private network chats (push-to-talk), which resulted in a lack of information available to supervisors and other field personnel. According to one article, "San Bernardino police Lt. Michael Madden, who was the first to arrive at the scene of the mass shooting at the Inland Regional Center, said one of the most troubling things about that day was that police radio communications were broadcast live, in real time, nationwide—on YouTube and other network systems—for all to hear, including potential suspects."¹¹⁴

Implementation of encrypted communications, however, can be controversial and should not be undertaken without careful consideration. It is important for public safety departments to gauge their communities' questions or concerns about the use of such technology. In addition, it is critical that departments that do use encrypted communications develop and implement strictly followed policies and protocols. With encryption, agencies should consider the necessity of requiring supervisory approval prior to use of the channel as well as monitoring by supervisory personnel. Unless approved by an incident commander, encryption should not be used during an operational or tactical event as doing so may create an officer safety issue for those not subscribed to the encrypted channel.

6.21 Ensure that communications extend to the appropriate public safety organizations even if the technology in use does not automatically do so.

Critical incidents often extend into varying jurisdictions, and it is important that agencies responsible for public safety in those jurisdictions be informed about the activities that are taking place there.

¹¹⁴ Joe Nelson, "Assemblyman Hosts Hearing on Lessons Learned from Dec. 2 San Bernardino Terror Attack," *San Bernardino Sun*, March 18, 2016, <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160318/assemblyman-hosts-hearing-on-lessons-learned-from-dec-2-san-bernardino-terror-attack>.

Building search

6.22 Pre-incident planning should include timely access to building diagrams, particularly critical infrastructure and plans of buildings where large numbers of persons gather on a regular basis.

6.23 Regions should adopt a standardized marking system, similar to the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group marking system,¹¹⁵ for easy identification of areas searched, cleared, and secured by law enforcement personnel.

Entry teams into the IRC reported many areas that were searched more than once because searchers were not certain whether other teams had previously cleared the area. Officers reported a lack of a system to distinguish areas that had been searched and secured.

6.24 Law enforcement agencies should establish training and protocols for the use of rapid entry systems used by fire and EMS providers so that the need to breach locked or barricaded doors is reduced.

6.25 States should establish a resource typing system, similar to the system used by the fire service,¹¹⁶ to categorize and track available resources that may be required to respond to a critical incident.

Trauma care

6.26 Public safety agencies should consider how they will deploy emergency medical responders in active shooter or other hostile events to ensure victim triage, extrication, and treatment.

6.27 To reduce the amount of time it takes for victims to receive medical care regions should establish medical tactical teams designed to work in a “warm zone,” allowing victims to be moved more quickly to a mass casualty triage area.

¹¹⁵ International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, “INSARAG Guidelines,” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, last modified February 11, 2015, <http://www.insarag.org/en/methodology/guidelines.html>.

¹¹⁶ Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, “Team Typing Information,” State of California, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.caloes.ca.gov/cal-oes-divisions/fire-rescue/hazardous-materials/team-typing-information>.

Equipment

6.28 Agencies should ensure adequate protective gear is issued to personnel that may respond to an active shooter incident. Equipment should include active shooter armor kits (ballistic helmets and ballistic vests with ceramic plates) that afford greater protection from high-powered semi- and fully automatic weapons and ammunition.

In this incident, members of the initial contact teams would have been inadequately protected had they confronted the terrorists at the IRC, where they were armed with .223 caliber assault rifles.

6.29 Law enforcement agencies should equip officers with personal tactical emergency medical kits.

These medical kits are designed to save lives and will allow officers to respond to victims' loss of blood quickly and efficiently. As part of the testimony provided to the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Dr. Alexander Eastman noted that "tactical first aid kits would significantly reduce the loss of both officer and civilian lives due to blood loss."¹¹⁷

6.30 If equipment is incorporated as an integral part of training, officers should have the equipment issued and available to them.

6.31 Response protocols should include positioning heavy fire response vehicles as shields from secondary devices and active shooters.

As part of preparing for the threat of secondary devices and continued active shooter activity, heavy vehicles should be positioned to shield victims and responders from danger.

¹¹⁷ President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report* (see note 4), 66.

7. Investigations

The law enforcement investigation of the terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center (IRC) and shootout that followed represents a complicated series of events that highlights the varying interests and objectives of the multiple agencies involved in the investigation phase. In an ideal scenario, these agencies would have the opportunity to negotiate interests and objectives before commencing operations or immediately afterward, but the constantly evolving nature of this situation required agencies to confront issues as they unfolded. As the investigation progressed and federal agencies began to assume more responsibilities, differences in investigative techniques and protocols, short-term versus long-term goals, and investigative experience created tension. The goal of this section is to highlight promising practices and inform agencies of some of the investigative concerns to consider in planning for similar events.

Promising practices

The terrorist attack at the IRC set in motion a series of events that continued to unfold rapidly. Immediately following the shooting at the IRC, several nearby agencies quickly responded to the scene to assist the San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD) with investigative needs, including the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD), member agencies of the Joint Terrorism Task Force,¹¹⁸ the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). While this large number of involved agencies could have caused confusion and duplicative efforts, the positive pre-existing relationships among San Bernardino law enforcement leaders allowed decisions on the division of work and areas of responsibility to be made quickly. As the agency with primary jurisdiction over crimes committed in the city of San Bernardino, the initial responsibility for conducting the investigation of the IRC fell to the SBPD. Given the severity of the incident, the SBCSD offered to assist in any way necessary, including beyond their regular role as coroners and managers of the county crime lab. In addition, when the suspects engaged officers in a lengthy shootout that left both terrorists dead and two officers wounded, it was decided by leaders within the Unified Command Center (UCC) that the investigation at that second shooting scene would be conducted by the SBCSD.

Cooperation between investigating agencies also extended to technology. The SBCSD offered the use of their 3D laser scanner to create 3D images of the IRC crime scene. This technology greatly enhances the accuracy of scene analysis and reconstruction. This collaboration allowed the FBI to obtain 3D data points that could be stored and can be analyzed remotely and indefinitely.

¹¹⁸ Member organizations assigned to the JTTF at the FBI office in Riverside include the SBCSD, the SBPD, and the Department of Homeland Security/Homeland Security Investigations.

Ultimately, once the incident was officially labeled a terrorist attack, the FBI became responsible for the investigation. While the diverse set of agency responsibilities could have caused myriad complications, the level of cooperation and collaboration among agency leadership greatly improved the overall outcome of the response and investigation. However, that does not mean that there were not challenges.

Parallel interests

The parallel interests of the various federal, state, and local investigators on scene during an investigation can turn into competing interests if investigators at all levels do not work together to identify strengths and assets, outline priorities, and develop complementary investigatory strategies. The chaotic and fluid nature will set a challenging scene for any investigation, making communication and coordination even more critical.

Once the gun battle between the suspects and police was cleared, local responding agencies treated the scene as an officer-involved shooting where the two assailants died, undertaking standard officer-involved shooting and homicide investigation protocol. During the investigation, several agents from different federal agencies arrived with specific tasks that did not fit with and could have compromised traditional homicide investigations. For example, one agent began examining the shooters' .223-caliber rifles and 9-mm handguns. The male assailant's rifle had been modified to attempt to make it fully automatic but because it was handmade and done poorly, authorities determined it was at best semiautomatic. Another agent came to collect the shooters' electronics, consisting of a cell phone, a tablet, and an MP3 player.

As mentioned in the earlier narrative, local investigators who were in the initial stages of the officer-involved shooting investigation found it difficult to work with federal law enforcement agents because of perceived competing roles and interests. Most investigators from the numerous agencies that responded did not have a prior working relationship with one another and did not understand one another's roles and priorities, including the priority of determining whether this was in fact an act of terrorism and immediately investigating any and all terrorism leads and links. This lack of understanding among the different agencies led to a lack of appreciation for the sensitive nature of the work that needed to be performed quickly by the various agencies and the need to quickly analyze the information obtained at the scenes.

In addition, the need to determine whether or not the incident was an act of terrorism created confusion among field investigators. Shortly after the initial 911 call from the IRC, local law enforcement officials believed that the events could be an act of terrorism. While this determination would shift primary investigative responsibility of the shootings to the FBI, UCC leaders chose to follow protocols associated with mass murder until the official determination was made. Therefore, the SBPD continued in the lead role investigating the IRC shooting and the SBCSD maintained responsibility for the officer-involved shooting scene on San Bernardino Avenue. However, this decision was not communicated from the UCC to all field investigative personnel from the FBI.

The positive pre-existing relationships among San Bernardino law enforcement leaders allowed decisions . . . to be made quickly.

According to local law enforcement investigators, another complicating factor arose when a change in FBI personnel temporarily affected collaboration and the investigation of the IRC scene. Just as crime scene teams of local investigators and FBI personnel had come up with joint solutions and were getting comfortable working together, the initial group of FBI personnel that had been deployed was replaced. The new group was unaware that the incident had not yet been confirmed as a terrorist attack and thought they were the lead investigators.¹¹⁹

Differences in evidence collection techniques, crime scene processing, and technology were also complicating factors. Both the SBPD and the SBCSD have experienced homicide detectives and crime scene investigators and state-of-the-art technology. When added to the personnel and resources that were brought by the FBI and other federal agencies involved, the overload created some concerns. For instance, some federal investigators did not follow the SBCSD techniques and protocols for submitting items to the pathologist, requiring additional work by the pathologists to determine what clothing belonged to each suspect.

The purpose of discussing the parallel or competing interests and priorities is not to be critical of any particular agency but to highlight the likelihood that some level of conflict may occur even among highly trained and well-intentioned professionals, especially when they have no prior relationship. The goal is to develop working relationships as well as an understanding of each agency's role, skills, experience, and capabilities before an incident happens. Positive working relationships can clarify roles, reduce conflict and increase collaboration.

Victims and witnesses

The logistics associated with the identification and interviewing of witnesses and victims were monumental. In the first few hours, local law enforcement investigators identified more than 400 victims and witnesses who needed to be moved from the IRC to a safe location, treated for varying levels of injuries, interviewed, and reunited with their families. In addition to maintaining the safety and security of the numerous victims and witnesses, issues related to their privacy and transportation arose during the process. Especially in an event of this size, critically assessing how the San Bernardino area agencies handled the victims and witnesses and identifying lessons learned is crucial as other agencies prepare for similar situations.

¹¹⁹ It should be noted this first set of FBI personnel were FBI SWAT and bomb technicians and not the actual investigators and evidence collectors. Once a room or building was tactically cleared, the FBI crime scene investigators took over the scene.

Investigators established an interview protocol that can best be described as an assembly line. Investigators first triaged the arriving witnesses to separate witnesses from victims while also identifying those who might have had information critical to identifying the suspects. A team of investigators then began the process of conducting individual interviews. Once the victims and witnesses had completed their interviews, pictures were taken in front of a whiteboard where the individuals' names were written to assist in later identification.

While the interviewing and documenting of witnesses and victims was conducted in an efficient way, many witnesses and officers expressed that several logistical issues became serious concerns. When the media determined that the Hernandez Center had been identified as the location where the victims and witnesses would be brought, they lined the path from the transport vehicles to the center. When the victims and witnesses arrived with law enforcement, members of the media were able to identify some of them by recording the name badges worn by employees and to attempt to interact with the witnesses. Some described the line into the church as similar to a "perp walk" when a suspect is walked through a public area, allowing the media to take photographs and video of the suspect. While this was not the intention of law enforcement, the experience was chilling to some of the witnesses.

Once inside the Rock Church, complicating the task of interviewing victims and witnesses was the self-deployment of clergy and counselors. While they were well-intentioned, many of them were not trained for a traumatic event such as this. This created situations where individuals who needed counseling were unable to get it in a timely fashion and counselors were mixed in with victims and witnesses.

Furthermore, witnesses and victims found it difficult to notify family members and friends. Many had to leave their cell phones behind when they fled the IRC, while others who were fortunate to have their phones discovered the phones had run out of battery charge. Charging cords were supplied by those who had them and those with active phones provided phones for others to use, but the long waits to make a phone call in such a critical time created even more frustration.

In addition, witnesses became frustrated when they had completed their interviews but learned that there would be a delay in being reunited with loved ones until the transport buses leaving the church were full.

Investigations lessons learned

While local law enforcement investigative personnel in San Bernardino were accustomed to working with regional partners during complex investigations, the influx of federal agents from various federal agencies outside the San Bernardino area created tension among investigative personnel. Mutual

recognition of the level of expertise agencies possess, both in experience and technology, and the different missions and priorities of the various agencies is important to the successful investigation of crime scenes requiring large multiagency response.

Parallel interests

7.1 All first responder agencies must recognize that not all mass casualty incidents are crime scenes (for example, natural disasters are not crime scenes), but all terrorist events are. All responders to a potential terrorist incident should understand the importance of evidence preservation, documentation, and collection.

7.2 Critical incident management is greatly enhanced when there are pre-existing relationships between leaders and field supervisors from all potential first responder agencies.

7.3 A determination should be made in identifying agencies with the best skills and tools to perform investigative tasks. Jurisdictional investigative authority does not necessarily correlate with investigative skills, abilities, training, and equipment.

Ideally, this determination would be made in advance of a critical incident, and the agency assigned to a task may not be the agency with investigative responsibility. This may be particularly true when incidents occur in areas where local law enforcement has unique experience, relationships, and assets.

Victims and witnesses

7.4 Critical incident training and exercises should include an investigative component that includes identifying all aspects of victim and witness identification, interviewing, and reunification.

8. Community Engagement, Relationships, and Public Information

In all critical incidents, law enforcement agencies face a delicate balance when it comes to informing the public about what is taking place versus protecting the investigation from outside influence. Law enforcement leaders should expect that some citizens suffer added fear as an event unfolds that it is part of a coordinated set of terror as experienced on September 11, 2001, in the United States and more recently in Paris and Brussels.

The news media's hunger for breaking news 24 hours a day, seven days a week can also compound law enforcement's ability to manage the delivery of information. The issue is no longer managing content only for television and newspapers; it now includes planning for and expecting challenges from online media outlets. These outlets can often operate without the scrutiny and rigor of some of the traditional types of media organizations. Many times these outlets report incorrect facts and information, leading to viral rumors that spread quickly. The reaction and rhetoric that follows viral rumors can hamper first responders' efforts as well as the investigation phase of an event.

When multiple federal, state, county, and local agencies are involved in an event, there is a potential for conflict and confusion with each agency operating under different media guidelines. In the San Bernardino terrorist attacks at the Inland Regional Center (IRC), however, the numerous agencies were able to work through challenges in a cohesive manner and successfully deliver messages to the public.

Public affairs

Because the case was classified as a mass shooting incident for the first two days, the San Bernardino Police Department (SBPD) initially retained the lead on the dissemination of information. At the time of the attack, the SBPD had a small public affairs office consisting only of two part-time public information officers (PIO), one of whom was out of the office for a family emergency. This meant that the backup PIO had to manage independently for the first few hours of the incident. SBPD Chief Jarrod Burguan soon accepted San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon's offer to have his public affairs unit work with Burguan's PIOs.

At the outset of the attack, Chief Burguan sent the PIO to the SBPD incident command center area designated for the press. Dozens of reporters had already gathered there, and the PIO was left without assistance for two hours. When Burguan realized that the single PIO would not be enough to manage the large scale incident, he tapped into the sheriff's department for its public affairs capabilities. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD) Public Affairs Unit consists

of PIOs, community liaisons, labor relations specialists, and others. Three of those members—the unit’s lieutenant, a veteran PIO, and the social media specialist —arrived at the scene and began working with the SBPD PIO.

The sheriff’s public affairs unit had already designated the incident as a level 3 event, which is the highest on its classification scale that was developed in 2013. A level 3 is defined as “any law enforcement incident or natural disaster that has a duration longer than 24 hours and will require the division to maintain operation. All personnel will be placed on a 12-hour on and 12-hour off operation until further notice.”¹²⁰

The social media specialist, using her department-issued iPhone (all members of the unit are issued smart phones), began using Twitter as a means to let the public know what was happening at the IRC. She posted her first tweet at 11:18 a.m., alerting the public of police activity in the area. Ensuing tweets informed the public about new developments throughout the day, including the officer-involved shooting with the two suspects hours later. Altogether, she tweeted 42 times on the first day with details about the event. Figure 3 is an example of an update to an earlier Twitter post.

Figure 3. Tweet from SB County Sheriff’s Office



Source: SB County Sheriff (@sbcountysheriff), “ACTIVE SHOOTER:Area of Orange Show Rd/ Waterman Ave near Park Center, & surrounding area remains VERY ACTIVE. AVOID!,” Twitter post, December 2, 2015, 11:51 a.m., <https://twitter.com/sbcountysheriff/status/672141064073965568>.

Chief Burguan keeps his own professional Twitter account and uses it both to promote the department and to provide information about incidents. He also tweeted throughout the day (examples are shown in figure 4 on page 93), including late that first night when there was a potential incident at a local warehouse facility. The tweets were picked up by the local TV news stations and helped diffuse that late-night event to become a nonstory.

¹²⁰ John McMahon, *Emergency Action Plan: Public Affairs Division* (San Bernardino, CA: San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department, 2016).

Figure 4. Tweets from SBPD Chief Jarrod Burguan

 **Chief Jarrod Burguan**
@SBPDChief Follow

New info evolving. 9pm press conference being trailed to 10:00. Appreciate everyone's patience.

RETWEETS 167 LIKES 107 

8:51 PM - 2 Dec 2015

  167  107 


 **Chief Jarrod Burguan**
@SBPDChief Follow

[@SanBernardinoPD](#) Officers following up on shooting at IRC encountered suspects. Officer involved shooting occurred in SnBdo.

RETWEETS 66 LIKES 33 

4:15 PM - 2 Dec 2015

  66  33 


 **Chief Jarrod Burguan**
@SBPDChief Follow

Suspects are down, one officer wounded. Details still unfolding.

RETWEETS 479 LIKES 255 

4:15 PM - 2 Dec 2015

  479  255 

 **Chief Jarrod Burguan**
@SBPDChief Follow

Residents in the area of south of SB Ave and west of Mtn View should shelter in place, police activity continues.

RETWEETS 246 LIKES 98 

4:18 PM - 2 Dec 2015

  246  98 

Source: Chief Jarrod Burguan's Twitter page, username @SBPDChief, accessed June 21, 2016, <https://twitter.com/SBPDChief>.

Contemporary law enforcement best practices recommends that “Law enforcement agencies should adopt model policies and best practices for technology-based community engagement that increases community trust and access.”¹²¹ This technology, particularly social media, can prove especially useful for communication in critical incidents. “During and after a disaster, it is not uncommon for traditional modes of communication, such as land-line telephone service and television news, to be unavailable. In addition, people may be displaced and therefore not have access to such devices. Social media is accessible through mobile devices, allowing people to take the information with them wherever they go. People may also receive these notifications via text message, a function that may be available when broadband and other cell phone connectivity is low.”¹²²

At the SBCSD’s Public Affairs Unit offices, the rest of the team was up and running. The unit’s main office has four 55-inch flat screen televisions that were tuned to local and cable news stations as a way to monitor what information was being relayed to the public. The unit also used an interactive electronic screen that is visible from all of the desks in the room. Only verified information that could be released to the media or public was posted there, which helped ensure that the unit put forth a consistent message. At the same time, journalists were encouraged to follow both the SBCSD and SBPD Twitter accounts for the newest details about the incident. This strategy reduced the number of phone inquiries from the press, thereby relieving staff to attend to other tasks.

As the first day progressed, public affairs members of the SBPD, SBCSD, the Redlands Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) worked together and met regularly. Public affairs staff members were also included in regular command-level meetings, which, at least for the SBCSD PIO, was a departure from the usual experience. Staffers praised this decision, which allowed them to efficiently craft messages with command leaders that would be delivered during press conferences held several times each day.

Details were considered, including managing how the three agencies’ leaders—Chief Burguan, Sheriff McMahon, and FBI Assistant Director David Bowdich (the FBI’s assistant director in charge of the Los Angeles field office)—would walk out to each press conference in the order of each speaker. All three leaders felt it was important to show the public the unified front of multiple agencies working cohesively together.

¹²¹ President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Final Report (see note 4), 36.

¹²² International Association of Chiefs of Police, *Emergency Preparedness and Response Fact Sheet* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013), <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/Portals/1/documents/Fact%20Sheets/Emergency%20Preparedness%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

During preparations for the scripted press conferences, the sheriff's social media specialist noted important points during command-level meetings to use at coordinated times. As law enforcement leaders addressed the press, the social media specialist tweeted statements that coincided with what was being said at the press conference, allowing for a multiplatform delivery of information to the public.

The SBCSD also had one of its Spanish-speaking PIOs at all of the press conferences. The PIO provided information to the Spanish-speaking press, including doing interviews for television broadcasts done in Spanish at the conclusion of press conferences.

A great many press requests were made early on for one-on-one interviews. Some were given when it was feasible, particularly with major cable news outlets. The public affairs units also intervened when journalists overstepped their bounds. For example, reporters from a cable news network showed up at the home of one of the first responders to the incident. They were counseled to not attempt to reach law enforcement personnel at their homes. A press conference planned that day was canceled, and journalists were informed that the cancellation was because of the attempted interview. The press made no more attempts for similar interviews. When it was possible, the two local agencies (SBPD and SBCSD) made sure to give local press contacts additional interviews as a way to strengthen the relationship with them and ultimately the communities they serve.

SBCSD officials praised training efforts made in the months prior to the December 2 attacks that set a framework for a relatively smooth process. This extended to having the public affairs unit in training exercises, which had not been done in the past but facilitated the success of the response.

As was to be expected, not every aspect of the response went smoothly. In the early stages of the event, the SBCSD set up a 1-800 number for people to call for information about their loved ones. Unfortunately the process moved too quickly, and the number was broadcast before staff had been put in place to answer the phones. Eventually, staff members were set up to take calls, but by that point, many people had called for information and had not been able to speak with anyone. That upset victims' relatives and generally created unnecessary frustration.

It was important to show the public the unified front of multiple agencies working cohesively together.

Best Practices from the Field: The Boston Marathon Bombings

In the hours and days following the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, the Boston Police Department's (BPD) Media Relations Office used social media, including the department's official Twitter account, to effectively manage the dissemination of timely and accurate information to the public. Through Twitter, the BPD was able to quickly correct misinformation being spread in the professional media and through social networks. The BPD's use of Twitter has since been commended as the first time that tweets were successfully used by a police department to engage with the community during a time of crisis. In *Social Media and Police Leadership: Lessons from Boston*, a report by the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard Kennedy School and coauthored by former BPD Commissioner Edward F. Davis III, the authors wrote that "BPD tweets rapidly became the most trusted source of information about the status of the investigation and were often retweeted hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands of times."

Source: Edward F. Davis III, Alejandro A. Alves, and David Alan Sklansky, *Social Media and Police Leadership: Lessons from Boston*, New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2014), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/244760.pdf>.

Elected officials

Members of the press were not the only group to descend upon the scene in large numbers. Many local legislators came to the IRC looking for information that they could then share with their constituents. In some cases, the legislators merely wanted to stand behind the law enforcement leaders at the press conferences to show their support. This was allowed as long as the legislators understood they would not be speaking. In other cases, some expected to be involved in operational plans. The public affairs staff had to explain the necessity of closed meetings involving confidential information. Again, this was well received because of the relationships that had been built previously. Legislators ultimately received important information about the incident at secondary briefings.

Generally, the encounters with legislators went smoothly as the SBCSD employs a legislative liaison who works with elected politicians on a daily basis. During the initial phase of the event, the liaison was left in the main office to answer calls, but with the growing number of legislators at the scene, sheriff's officials realized they needed to have the liaison on location. The liaison guided legislators, advising them on the balance between focusing on the victims and conducting interviews with the media. In addition, just as the media had been told, legislators were encouraged to keep abreast of the news by following the agencies' social media accounts. A few federal legislators called the liaison and law enforcement leaders directly to say they were staying away from the scene but to offer their support and resources if anything was needed.

Community liaisons

The SBCSD's public affairs unit also includes several community liaisons. One of the liaisons is responsible for developing relationships with communities of faith, including the local Muslim community, which has a half dozen mosques in the area. Other local police departments do the same, including the Redlands Police Department.

In the aftermath of the event, the SBCSD received several phone calls from members of the local Muslim community because of fears of retribution. They asked for advice and protection. Some of the mosques were in the jurisdiction of the SBCSD; others were outside of it, and their concerns were passed on to the appropriate departments. Additional police patrols were made at local mosques. Although there were no local incidents threatening or desecrating local mosques, some cases were reported in other parts of southern California during that time.¹²³

The public affairs team also sent representatives, sometimes department leaders, to news conferences held by local mosques to denounce the violent attack. As occurs in some communities, lack of trust had made forming strong community-police relationship within the Muslim community difficult. Interestingly, the liaison reported that following the incident, relationships improved between the department and local Muslim leaders. In an interview that took place months after the attack, a member of a mosque in Chino (the largest mosque in the area, about 30 minutes to the west of San Bernardino) said the incident was extremely disturbing and painful for the Muslim community. He said, "It was an attack on us in a lot of ways because we have been casting a narrative that is focused on fighting terrorism. [Extremists] have hijacked a platform and a scripture that we believe doesn't relate to any of this." He also added, "There is nothing worse than your neighbor being suspicious of you. I don't know how it feels to be persecuted, but I can appreciate it. Even if it is an honest suspicion, you feel you have to do something."

In response, the mosque opened its doors to the public and held a meeting to welcome in their neighbors. More than 300 people came, including representatives of local law enforcement. The mosque has also joined in an effort called "True Islam," and has a website to promote it.¹²⁴

¹²³ Casey Harper, "California Mosques Fall Victim to String of Hate Crimes Following San Bernardino Shooting," The Daily Caller, last modified December 14, 2015, <http://dailycaller.com/2015/12/14/california-mosques-struck-by-hate-crimes-after-san-bernardino-shooting/>.

¹²⁴ "True Islam and the Extremists," Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.trueislam.com>.

Community engagement, relationships, and public information lessons learned

Law enforcement leaders in San Bernardino recognize the importance of community trust and long-term relationships with local leaders. They also fully appreciate the public expectation for timely and accurate information regarding events within the region. Critical to the public information strategy is the use of social media.

Public affairs and media management

Social media

8.1 Using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Periscope, Flickr, NextDoor.com, and others has become critical for releasing timely and accurate information both to the public and to the traditional media. By being active on social media leading up to critical incidents, law enforcement agencies can better inform the public.

Information releases

8.2 The involvement of line staff responsible for the release of information to the public in executive level strategy meetings proved critical in deciding which information should be released while allowing for a unified message to be relayed from multiple agencies and platforms.

Develop media response through exercise

8.3 Public affairs units should be included in all training, whether it is conducted as a tabletop or a live exercise. Also, creating a system to classify multiple levels of response to different sorts of events for public affairs units will only improve the ability to respond quickly and effectively.

Public affairs staff reported that being involved in regional active shooter training better prepared them for the IRC response. They also noted that the ability to use simulated social media sites identified potential response problems and allowed them to more quickly provide information to the public.

Legislative and community relationships

8.4 When possible, identify a liaison to work directly with and coordinate elected officials' involvement in the incident response. Liaisons should be at the scene, not in the office, as this is where many politicians will likely be located. The liaison can help officials stay focused on predesignated duties and responsibilities rather than being involved on scene or on camera when such involvement is outside the scope of the officials' jurisdictions or duties.

Legislative leaders can positively impact community trust. They play an important role in keeping elected politicians appropriately informed while allowing law enforcement leaders to focus on operations.

8.5 Law enforcement should establish and build upon relationships with communities of faith and faith leaders. These relationships need to be established over time and with proactive efforts prior to any sort of major incident.

The SBCSD has a liaison to various communities of faith within the area, including the Muslim community. Departments should consider assigning liaisons to maintain strong relationships and open lines of communication.¹²⁵

8.6 After an incident occurs that could negatively impact a specific community, law enforcement should take added steps to protect them from potential retribution and advise them how to handle possible threats.

8.7 When establishing any type of public hotline, the infrastructure and staffing must be in place before a public announcement is made.

8.8 Law enforcement agencies must keep in mind the need to work with and prepare community members who own property that is involved in high profile crimes for the national and possibly international attention it will draw from the media.

This attention can be overwhelming on multiple levels to people who are not accustomed to dealing with the media. By reaching out and working with these community members, law enforcement agencies show their willingness to be proactive in their communities.

¹²⁵ The existing relationship between the SBCSD and members of the Muslim community greatly assisted the Police Foundation team.

9. Post-Event Responder and Victim Welfare

“While the first tasks in disaster management are to secure the scene, to triage, and to evacuate victims to definitive care, the disaster plan fails if it stops at the hospital door,” according to Jeffery Hammond and Jill Brooks.¹²⁶ “It has been recognized that both disaster victims and workers are at risk for acute and chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).” Studies by North, Herman, and their colleagues also suggest that the experience of responding to terrorist attacks significantly increase the risk of symptoms of PTSD and other psychiatric sequelae.¹²⁷ These findings have led to “attempts to intervene early so as to prevent, or at least minimize psychological morbidity following traumatic events.”¹²⁸

After initially staging victims and witnesses at the San Bernardino Golf Course, the decision was made to transport more than 400 witnesses to the Rock Church and World Outreach Center on buses obtained with the assistance of the San Bernardino City Unified School District Police. The Rock Church was a large facility with services, food, beverages, and ample parking. According to the designated incident commander at the Rock Church, their “first thought was [to] get dignity back to the victims.”

Figure 5 on page 102 shows the location of the staging areas in relations to other relevant locations in the December 2 incident.

¹²⁶ Jeffrey Hammond and Jill Brooks, “The World Trade Center Attack: Helping the Helpers: The Role of Critical Incident Stress Management,” *Critical Care* 5, no. 6 (December 2001), 315–317, doi: 10.1186/cc1059.

¹²⁷ Carol S. North et al., “Psychiatric Disorders in Rescue Workers after the Oklahoma City Bombing,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 159, no. 5 (May 2002), 857–859, <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdf/10.1176/appi.ajp.159.5.857>; Daniel Herman, Chip Felton, and Ezra Susser, “Mental Health Needs in New York State Following the September 11th Attacks,” *Journal of Urban Health* 79, no. 3 (September 2002), 322–331, doi: 10.1093/jurban/79.3.322.

¹²⁸ Hammond and Brooks, “The World Trade Center Attack” (see note 126).

Figure 5. Relative locations of events and staging areas



Map data: Google, Image Landsat

Upon arrival, the victims and witnesses were separated into two groups based on their level of involvement in the incident. One group was made up of people who witnessed the shooting, observed the shooters, or were able to provide critical information regarding the incident. The second group was made up of people who had indirect knowledge of the shooting; for example, they may have heard gunshots or assisted injured people.

SBPD detectives and officers audio recorded all of the primary victim and witness interviews. Law enforcement personnel from other agencies interviewed all secondary witnesses. Every person that was interviewed was also photographed. After the interviews were completed, the witnesses were transported to the Rudy C. Hernandez Community Center, where they were reunited with their families. However, because the media had staged at the Hernandez Center, victims and witnesses had to walk through them prior to entering the center.

The San Bernardino County Coroner established a family assistance center at the Hampton Inn for the families of the deceased. Security was provided by the SBCSD. Inside, approximately two dozen tables that seated eight people each were set up and staffed with coroner's office personnel and members of the behavioral health team. In addition, a buffet was set up and drinks were available.

Clergy from numerous local houses of worship self-deployed to both the Rock Church and the Hernandez Community Center. Counselors were also available at both facilities. Victims indicated that they had difficulty identifying chaplains and counselors; as a result, neither clergy members nor counselors were able to provide significant services to the victims.

Best Practices from the Field: The Boston Marathon Bombings

In the aftermath of the bombings at the Boston Marathon in 2013, runners who were outside the city limits were directed to a series of temporary safe havens until they could be transferred to a centralized location where they could collect their belongings and receive counseling and other support services. Once the decision was made to have this centralized location—referred to as the Family Reunification Center—at the Castle at Park Plaza, the City of Boston went to great lengths to ensure the privacy of individuals arriving to obtain information and gather their belongings, including instituting media restrictions near and in the Castle. This provided a level of comfort to individuals seeking guidance and services at the Castle.

In addition, through the partnership of local, state, and federal agencies, the Boston Public Health Commission also opened a separate Family Assistance Center (FAC) with the mission of coordinating services and resources for survivors, their families, and the families of the victims. The FAC services included mental health counseling, spiritual care, and other care. The location of the center was not publicly disclosed, and security was in place to ensure privacy of all individuals.

Source: *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings* (Boston: Massachusetts State Police, 2014), <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/mema/after-action-report-for-the-response-to-the-2013-boston-marathon-bombings.pdf>.

San Bernardino County District Attorney victim service advocates reported that it was very difficult to obtain and share accurate information with families of victims. This caused some families to travel to area hospitals in an attempt to locate victims. In one case, a victim's husband was told that his wife had died, only to find out that although she had been shot she was stable and in a different hospital. Victims expressed concern that there were significant delays in notifying family members of the deceased. The victim service advocates assisted the coroner in making death notifications on the day after the incident.

Victims said the initial response by first responders was what they expected based on previous active shooter training. They expressed frustration and concern for their safety while they waited on the San Bernardino Public Golf Course for more than three hours before being transferred to the Rock Church. Many victims were upset because they were unable to contact their family members as they either were without phones or their phone batteries had died. They also expressed concern about the length of time they had to wait in line to have their photographs taken before they were transported to the Hernandez Center.

Some county employee victims were also upset because they were unable to access benefits in a timely manner, were not provided adequate counseling services, and were expected to return to work within days of the event. An IRC employee expressed concern that they received limited counseling and

remarked that at the time of the interview some employees had yet to receive any counseling. Some first responders also expressed concern and frustration regarding their inability to obtain counseling services or follow up from their agency administrators.

Responder mental health

In San Bernardino, first responders in all agencies involved in the terrorist shooting incident experienced varying levels of support and intervention in the days and weeks that followed. During interviews, the team became acutely aware that the emotions brought up by memories of the incident in some of the responders were still very raw and not yet processed. While many reported that their departments immediately provided and continue to provide considerable mental health trauma support, others struggled with identifying how to get the help they needed.

Active shooter and other hostile event incidents take an emotional toll on all involved as well as those watching it play out from elsewhere in the community, across the nation, and around the world. Addressing the mental health impact, particularly of the victims and the first responders, is imperative. Not only can this trauma, if left untreated, hinder the healing of the entire community but unaddressed trauma can also create officer safety and work performance issues in police departments.¹²⁹

The culture of policing has historically not embraced the need to attend to the mental health of police personnel. Cops are expected to be tough, resilient, and able to bounce back without much mental health treatment or professional attention. In fact, some of the officers and civilians advised the team that they struggled with the stigma of asking for help and appearing weak to their colleagues. One civilian department employee told the team that he had teased one of his colleagues who had attended a critical incident debriefing.

The law enforcement profession is beginning to recognize that resilience does not automatically happen; it takes time, attention, and support. The *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* recognized that the culture of law enforcement stigma needs to change, saying, "This transformation should also overturn the tradition of silence on psychological problems, encouraging officers to seek help without concern about negative consequences."¹³⁰

Leadership is critical in setting the tone for open and honest dialogue about the mental health needs of an entire department, particularly in time of crisis. "In a critical incident it is easy for the department to single out personnel it believes are impacted and provide support to them. It is hard to make such a

¹²⁹ Usher et al., *Preparing for the Unimaginable* (see note 81), 14.

¹³⁰ President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report* (see note 4), 62.

judgment when the personnel involved in the critical incident may not even know they need help.”¹³¹ It is important that the department acknowledge and provide support to all personnel who are involved in the critical incident. All involved personnel have the potential to experience stress reactions, and targeting only those who demonstrate an obvious need for the support can create immediate and future issues related to post-traumatic stress. “It is better for the department to treat all employees consistently.”¹³²

Post-event responder and victim welfare lessons learned

Law enforcement leaders and personnel in San Bernardino recognized the need to remove victims and witnesses from the IRC to the San Bernardino Golf Course for safety, triage, treatment, and transport to the appropriate medical facilities. They also recognized the importance of returning dignity to the victims as well as the importance of interviewing victims and witnesses in a safe, stable, and more comfortable environment. The San Bernardino public safety agencies established a system that would do that, but they also learned lessons in the process. There also exist opportunities to learn from the need to address responder mental health needs following critical incidents.

Reunification

9.1 Designate a family reunification center.

9.2 Establish and maintain access control and security as soon as the family reunification center is established.

9.3 Designate one or more areas near but not immediately adjacent to the family reunification center where the public and the media can gather without interfering.

9.4 Jurisdictions and communities facing similar challenges should consider venue security and controlled media staging areas and identify opportunities that facilitate reunification.

¹³¹ IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center, *Critical Incident Stress Management: Concepts and Issues Paper* (Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2011), 2, <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/CriticalIncidentStressPaper.pdf>.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Reuniting families at the Hernandez Community Center reduced confusion and facilitated victim and witness interviews at the Rock Church. However, victims and witnesses should not have had to walk through a media gauntlet. In the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing, the City of Boston ensured the privacy of individuals arriving at their designated Family Reunification Center, which provided a level of comfort to victims and those seeking guidance and services.¹³³

Making clergy and counseling available

9.5 Designate a special area where clergy and counselors can assemble within the family reunification center.

Make sure clergy and counselor areas are easily and clearly identifiable. Make sure victims, family members, and friends are aware that clergy and counselors are present. Let clergy know that victims, family members, and friends will initiate contact with them if they want assistance.

9.6 Provide training regarding Psychological First Aid to clergy members and chaplains who are designated to respond to mass casualty and critical incidents.

9.7 Credential clergy and counselors so that they are vetted, properly trained, and readily identifiable as such to prevent untrained persons from entering secured areas.

Communicating victim information

9.8 Be prepared to explain to families of victims why identification of the deceased takes so long.

Families should be given general information about how and why the crime scene has to be processed before the deceased can be processed—and how long both processes generally take.

9.9 In mass casualty events, notifications should be made in a timely manner to lessen the stress on family members or significant others as they are waiting notification about loved ones involved in the incident. Whenever possible, notifications should be made in person.

The San Bernardino Coroner's office made all notifications in person. However, some family members were angry that it took so long to be notified. According to the captain assigned to the coroner's office, "They were already expecting it. They were already prepped for it. They just needed to know." The captain explained that the coroner's division policy is being reviewed to improve their notification protocols and to ensure consistency with best practices.

¹³³ *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings* (Boston: Massachusetts State Police, 2014), 105, <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/mema/after-action-report-for-the-response-to-the-2013-boston-marathon-bombings.pdf>.

9.10 If possible, establish one file on victim information to avoid conflicting or incomplete information being given to significant others.

Hospitals, police, emergency management services (EMS), and victim advocates are the primary suppliers and users of this information and should work together to create a template and protocols for mass casualty incidents. This recommendation could be difficult to implement because of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other confidentiality issues.

Victim and witness accommodations

9.11 Jurisdictions and communities faced with similar challenges of managing large numbers of victims and witnesses (in this case more than 400 people) should identify safe, stable, and comfortable facilities in advance of an incident. Natural disaster preparedness serves as model for predesignated areas.

As previously mentioned, victims expressed concern regarding the amount of time spent on the golf course (approximately three hours).

9.12 Consider provisions for victim and witness care while they are awaiting interviews and family members are being notified. These may include making cell phone charging stations and other forms of communication available and making food and water available. Counselors should be clearly identified with arm bands, vests, or similar so that they are readily identified by victims and witnesses.

While the Rock Church provided an appropriate venue, victims expressed concern and frustration with the inability to contact family members, lack of counseling services, and the lengthy interview and photographing process.

9.13 Jurisdictions and communities challenged by the need to interview large numbers of victims should consider staffing implications and request assistance from other agencies if appropriate.

While it is completely understandable that the SBPD wanted to interview all victims and witnesses with firsthand knowledge of the event for continuity and evidence purposes, it did contribute to victim frustration and concern.

9.14 Jurisdictions and communities challenged by victim and witness accountability should consider methods for expediting the process to reduce stress on victims and witnesses.

Photographing victims and witnesses was an appropriate and important decision to ensure that all involved persons were accounted for. However, victims were frustrated by the length of time it took to do this.

Victim and responder mental health

9.15 Post-event victim and responder welfare should be an integral part of interagency planning, training, and exercises.

Having several appropriate spaces identified that can handle the various stages (triage, interviews, counseling, etc.) of events will serve both victims and their unique needs as well as responders effectively by ensuring a safe space to interview and provide services to victims and their families. Planning and training should also include action plans to ensure services are provided to both victims and responders following the “end” of an event and before returning to normal work.

9.16 Ensure your department has a policy regarding mental health support after critical incidents, and clearly communicate it to the entire department.¹³⁴

9.17 Assign a mental health or officer wellness incident commander to oversee officer mental health and coordinate services among participating agencies.¹³⁵

9.18 Compel participation in critical incident debriefings or post-incident counseling both for victims and civilian and commissioned staff.

It is clear that victims and first responders to terrorist or active shooter or other hostile events or mass casualty incidents run a significant risk of immediate or prolonged psychological morbidity (or both). Jurisdictions and communities facing similar challenges should ensure, if not compel, participation in critical incident debriefings or post-incident counseling. In addition, agency leaders should endeavor to provide debriefings for their departments, sub-units, and individuals in a timely and appropriate manner.

9.19 Consider follow-up counseling as it is not unusual for post-traumatic stress to manifest itself several weeks or months after an event.

9.20 In addition to mental health assistance, consider unit, team, or department-level debriefings to bring closure to the event.

¹³⁴ Usher et al., *Preparing for the Unimaginable* (see note 81).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Section IV. Conclusion

Conclusion

In a time of considerable scrutiny of police practices and community relationships, the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino bring to light the very real threats that communities and the law enforcement agencies tasked with protecting those communities face every day. There is no doubt that we all must work together to counter these threats and focus on public safety.

Many of the lessons learned during the response on December 2, 2015, continue to build on the body of knowledge that exists to assist law enforcement agencies in their ability to protect and strengthen relationships with their community. Several tie into the principles of community policing and even parallel pillars of the *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. As the Police Foundation continues to work to advance policing through innovation, it is no surprise that the lessons learned on that day tie to the ideals of 21st century policing.

The lessons learned in this report, and the Critical Response as a whole, add to the growing body of literature that public safety agencies can use to enhance their preparation for—and response to—active shooter and other hostile events, including future terrorist attacks.

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Initialisms

ALERT	Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training
ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
CAD	computer-aided dispatch
CHP	California Highway Patrol
COPS Office	Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
CRTA	Critical Response Technical Assistance program
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HSI	Homeland Security Investigations
IAB	InterAgency Board

IAFF	International Association of Fire Fighters
ICS	incident command system
IRC	Inland Regional Center
IVS	Inland Valley Regional special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team
JIC	Joint Information Center
NIMS	National Incident Management System
PF	Police Foundation
PIO	public information officer
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
SBCSD	San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
SBCUSD	San Bernardino City Unified School District
SBFD	San Bernardino Fire Department
SBPD	San Bernardino Police Department
SWAT	special weapons and tactics
UCC	Unified Command Center

Appendix A. Lessons Learned

- 4.1 Organizational leadership should ensure that all involved in the response feel valued and are provided access to the physical and mental health resources they may need after a critical incident. Agencies should identify best practices related to employee wellness.
- 4.2 Regularly review the lessons learned from critical incidents with regional first responders and develop trainings that incorporate lessons and promising practices.
- 4.3 Include representatives from all levels of the organization in critical decisions to enhance outcomes.
- 4.4 Predetermine elected officials' roles and responsibilities in managing critical incidents, and include them in critical incident training and exercises.
- 4.5 The intense media coverage associated with a high-profile event is often overwhelming and will place additional demands on leaders that may take them away from daily operations. These demands will continue long after the conclusion of the incident, requiring leaders to constantly assess the effects the increased attention and notoriety bring on themselves and the organization.
- 4.6 Publicly demonstrate and recognize the collaboration and support from others.
- 5.1 Agencies should routinely examine critical incident reviews and plan at a regional level for the possibility of similar events.
- 5.2 Agencies should use ICS beyond large-scale tactical events and incorporate as many of the principles as possible in response to routine emergencies so it becomes a regular component of a department's operating philosophy.
- 5.3 Regional public safety partners should plan and exercise unified command for complex incidents on a regular basis. This includes law enforcement, fire, EMS, and emergency management as well as other government and nongovernment agencies as appropriate.
- 5.4 As soon as possible and practical during an incident, establish a unified command of all primary first responders to facilitate communication, situational awareness, operational coordination, allocation of resources, and delivery of services.
- 5.5 After adequate personnel are on scene, additional personnel should be directed to staging areas for assignment of duties. As described in a variety of NIMS courses, designating a staging area manager is critical during the early moments of the response.

5.6 Agencies must plan for potential chaos created by public safety personnel responding to an active shooter.

5.7 Agencies should anticipate and plan a timely transition from the somewhat chaotic active shooter response to a more methodical search for possible suspects, triage of victims, and victim and witness extrication.

5.8 Responders should constantly evaluate security risks of command post locations and make appropriate adjustments as required.

5.9 Send pictures or maps of the area—building layouts, parking lots, streets, and the like—to dispatch and vehicle mobile data terminals (MDT). Employ technology, such as such as helicopters, unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), or pre-existing camera systems (as available) to produce information in real time.

5.10 It is the responsibility of each first responder to assess a situation while en route to an active shooter incident as well as after arriving to determine if they are needed as part of the response. If an officer has initiated action at a scene or been assigned a specific task the officer should not leave unless directed to do so.

5.11 Supervisors must anticipate the likelihood of unnecessary self-deployment and make efforts to discourage and restrict officer response.

5.12 Agencies must continually plan and evaluate ingress and egress routes during critical incidents. An incident safety officer should be designated as quickly as possible and pay particular attention to the access or egress of emergency vehicles. Ambulance and medical transport should be given a high priority task for police and fire incident command.

6.1 Because initial responders to a critical incident may be from a variety of agencies, regional training improves performance in a crisis response and should include all disciplines and levels of first responders. Fire, EMS, and other potential first responders should be included in in-service active shooter training as appropriate.

6.2 In-service training, regardless of the topic, should be updated on an annual basis and meet federal, state, and other appropriate certification standards.

6.3 The ability to understand and apply response strategies in a high-stress environment improves performance. Training should attempt to create as much sensory deprivation or stimulus as possible to simulate real-world scenarios.

6.4 First responders should be familiar with critical infrastructure as well as facilities that regularly bring large numbers of people together. Consideration should be given to reducing or eliminating environmental stressors if possible. Sound, darkness, and other environmental stressors can make it difficult to find and identify suspects and may hinder evacuations as well as search and rescue efforts.

- 6.5 Law enforcement agencies should train all officers in tactical emergency medical care.
- 6.6 Active shooter training should include transition from a dynamic active shooter situation (a situation that is evolving very rapidly consistent with the suspect's actions) to a static situation (a situation that is not evolving or in motion because the suspect[s] is contained, has escaped, or is incapacitated). Training should recognize that active shooter incidents may evolve from dynamic to static situations and possibly back to dynamic or mass casualty situations requiring transitions over the course of the police response.
- 6.7 Training exercises should continue past the point where the threat no longer exists and extend to the notification of victims' families by the medical examiner or coroner.
- 6.8 Training should include secondary device identification, notification, and isolation.
- 6.9 Civilian and private sector training for an active shooter event can save lives. Inform the public of appropriate measures to take if they are involved in an active shooter or other hostile event, and provide a general overview of the police response.
- 6.10 Communications centers should hold regular interdepartment interoperability communication drills with regional public safety agencies. Human and equipment communication issues should be identified and remedied during communication drills and joint exercises.
- 6.11 Dispatch centers should be included in incident command system (ICS) training, which should include testing public safety proficiency in using radio and other communication systems.
- 6.12 Because dispatch systems can quickly become overwhelmed in a mass casualty, active shooter, or other critical incident, agencies should develop a tactical dispatcher system that provides a dedicated dispatcher responsible for the operational needs of the incident and tactical commander.
- 6.13 Develop a system and protocols for diverting nonemergency calls elsewhere as well as establishing protocols to handle calls from family, friends, and media.
- 6.14 During large-scale multiagency events, dispatch personnel should be colocated to facilitate information exchange and resource coordination and to compliment ICS.
- 6.15 CAD systems should be load tested to ensure the systems can handle a significant event lasting a long period of time.
- 6.16 Training exercises should simulate a system slowdown or shutdown during a crisis and describe alternative communication strategies and protocols.
- 6.17 Agencies should identify facilities within their communities that pose radio transmission and reception difficulties and use those facilities to train personnel and identify ways to mitigate poor communication so they are prepared should an incident occur.

- 6.18 Agencies must reinforce radio discipline. Merely increasing radio capacity alone does not reduce the volume nor does it establish a priority of communication. It is an officer's responsibility based upon training and agency policy to differentiate between critical radio communication and less critical communication that does not need to be broadcast.
- 6.19 Additional consideration should be given to merged radio systems and protocols between law enforcement, fire, and EMS.
- 6.20 The ability to communicate using encrypted channels improves communication without jeopardizing officer and community safety.
- 6.21 Ensure that communications extend to the appropriate public safety organizations even if the technology in use does not automatically do so.
- 6.22 Pre-incident planning should include timely access to building diagrams, particularly critical infrastructure and plans of buildings where large numbers of persons gather on a regular basis.
- 6.23 Regions should adopt a standardized marking system, similar to the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group marking system, for easy identification of areas searched, cleared, and secured by law enforcement personnel.
- 6.24 Law enforcement agencies should establish training and protocols for the use of rapid entry systems used by fire and EMS providers so that the need to breach locked or barricaded doors is reduced.
- 6.25 States should establish a resource typing system, similar to the system used by the fire service, to categorize and track available resources that may be required to respond to a critical incident.
- 6.26 Public safety agencies should consider how they will deploy emergency medical responders in active shooter or other hostile events to ensure victim triage, extrication, and treatment.
- 6.27 To reduce the amount of time it takes for victims to receive medical care regions should establish medical tactical teams designed to work in a "warm zone," allowing victims to be moved more quickly to a mass casualty triage area.
- 6.28 Agencies should ensure adequate protective gear is issued to personnel that may respond to an active shooter incident. Equipment should include active shooter armor kits (ballistic helmets and ballistic vests with ceramic plates) that afford greater protection from high-powered semi- and fully automatic weapons and ammunition.
- 6.29 Law enforcement agencies should equip officers with personal tactical emergency medical kits.

6.30 If equipment is incorporated as an integral part of training, officers should have the equipment issued and available to them.

6.31 Response protocols should include positioning heavy fire response vehicles as shields from secondary devices and active shooters.

7.1 All first responder agencies must recognize that not all mass casualty incidents are crime scenes (for example, natural disasters are not crime scenes), but all terrorist events are. All responders to a potential terrorist incident should understand the importance of evidence preservation, documentation, and collection.

7.2 Critical incident management is greatly enhanced when there are pre-existing relationships between leaders and field supervisors from all potential first responder agencies.

7.3 A determination should be made in identifying agencies with the best skills and tools to perform investigative tasks. Jurisdictional investigative authority does not necessarily correlate with investigative skills, abilities, training, and equipment.

7.4 Critical incident training and exercises should include an investigative component that includes identifying all aspects of victim and witness identification, interviewing, and reunification.

8.1 Using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Periscope, Flickr, NextDoor.com, and others has become critical for releasing timely and accurate information both to the public and to the traditional media. By being active on social media leading up to critical incidents, law enforcement agencies can better inform the public.

8.2 The involvement of line staff responsible for the release of information to the public in executive level strategy meetings proved critical in deciding which information should be released while allowing for a unified message to be relayed from multiple agencies and platforms.

8.3 Public affairs units should be included in all training, whether it is conducted as a tabletop or a live exercise. Also, creating a system to classify multiple levels of response to different sorts of events for public affairs units will only improve the ability to respond quickly and effectively.

8.4 When possible, identify a liaison to work directly with and coordinate elected officials' involvement in the incident response. Liaisons should be at the scene, not in the office, as this is where many politicians will likely be located. The liaison can help officials stay focused on predesignated duties and responsibilities rather than being involved on scene or on camera when such involvement is outside the scope of the officials' jurisdictions or duties.

8.5 Law enforcement should establish and build upon relationships with communities of faith and faith leaders. These relationships need to be established over time and with proactive efforts prior to any sort of major incident.

8.6 After an incident occurs that could negatively impact a specific community, law enforcement should take added steps to protect them from potential retribution and advise them how to handle possible threats.

8.7 When establishing any type of public hotline, the infrastructure and staffing must be in place before a public announcement is made.

8.8 Law enforcement agencies must keep in mind the need to work with and prepare community members who own property that is involved in high profile crimes for the national and possibly international attention it will draw from the media.

9.1 Designate a family reunification center.

9.2 Establish and maintain access control and security as soon as the family reunification center is established.

9.3 Designate one or more areas near but not immediately adjacent to the family reunification center where the public and the media can gather without interfering.

9.4 Jurisdictions and communities facing similar challenges should consider venue security and controlled media staging areas and identify opportunities that facilitate reunification.

9.5 Designate a special area where clergy and counselors can assemble within the family reunification center.

9.6 Provide training regarding Psychological First Aid to clergy members and chaplains who are designated to respond to mass casualty and critical incidents.

9.7 Credential clergy and counselors so that they are vetted, properly trained, and readily identifiable as such to prevent untrained persons from entering secured areas.

9.8 Be prepared to explain to families of victims why identification of the deceased takes so long.

9.9 In mass casualty events, notifications should be made in a timely manner to lessen the stress on family members or significant others as they are waiting notification about loved ones involved in the incident. Whenever possible, notifications should be made in person.

9.10 If possible, establish one file on victim information to avoid conflicting or incomplete information being given to significant others.

9.11 Jurisdictions and communities faced with similar challenges of managing large numbers of victims and witnesses (in this case more than 400 people) should identify safe, stable, and comfortable facilities in advance of an incident. Natural disaster preparedness serves as model for predesignated areas.

- 9.12 Consider provisions for victim and witness care while they are awaiting interviews and family members are being notified. These may include making cell phone charging stations and other forms of communication available and making food and water available. Counselors should be clearly identified with arm bands, vests, or similar so that they are readily identified by victims and witnesses.
- 9.13 Jurisdictions and communities challenged by the need to interview large numbers of victims should consider staffing implications and request assistance from other agencies if appropriate.
- 9.14 Jurisdictions and communities challenged by victim and witness accountability should consider methods for expediting the process to reduce stress on victims and witnesses.
- 9.15 Post-event victim and responder welfare should be an integral part of interagency planning, training, and exercises.
- 9.16 Ensure your department has a policy regarding mental health support after critical incidents, and clearly communicate it to the entire department.
- 9.17 Assign a mental health or officer wellness incident commander to oversee officer mental health and coordinate services among participating agencies.
- 9.18 Compel participation in critical incident debriefings or post-incident counseling both for victims and civilian and commissioned staff.
- 9.19 Consider follow-up counseling as it is not unusual for post-traumatic stress to manifest itself several weeks or months after an event.
- 9.20 In addition to mental health assistance, consider unit, team, or department-level debriefings to bring closure to the event.

Appendix B. Analysis of San Bernardino City Unified School District After Action Report Data on the Impact of the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Attack

Frank Straub, Maria Valdovinos, and Joyce Iwashita

Context

The San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) responded to the December 2, 2015, terrorist incident scene with police officers as well as Office of Emergency Services personnel to assist with scene management and medical triage and security. In addition to providing first responders, the school district was significantly impacted in that it initiated a lockdown of all 80 schools and other buildings in an effort to secure all locations, personnel, and students in their care. This kept more than 50,000 students and 8,000 staff members and visitors from moving for a matter of hours.

In the days and weeks that followed, the SBCUSD conducted approximately 90 detailed after action reviews (AAR) within each school and department. The SBCUSD was interested in having an independent group organize and analyze the AAR data and provide feedback on common themes and areas on which to focus.

The Police Foundation (PF), under the direction of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), agreed to undertake the analysis of SBCUSD AAR data as the data provide insight into some of the community impact within the larger critical incident review completed by the Police Foundation.

Method

The SBCUSD submitted 94 AARs to the PF. PF staff coded and analyzed the AARs for themes related to actions taken by the SBCUSD in the wake of the December 2, 2015, terrorist incident in San Bernardino, California. These AARs provide an overview of actions taken by 28 departments, 44 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, and 10 high schools. In addition, one AAR was completed following a district meeting and one AAR was completed following a principals' meeting. As each AAR was completed by a department or school, or following a group meeting, the site is considered to be the unit of analysis.

Methodological approach

To complete the AAR, each SBCUSD site was asked to record the following on paper:

- What actually happened in the situation they just experienced
- What they learned through this experience about what to do and how to do it
- Given what was learned, how those insights can be applied to what is done next

The review process, using an instrument provided by the SBCUSD, consisted of

- identifying sites;
- obtaining a description of the incidents;
- asking the sites to identify lessons learned, including strengths and weaknesses of the response both at the site and district level.

This type of critical incident technique is widely used to gather insight into both effective and ineffective behavior in a wide variety of contexts, and it is particularly useful for gathering insight into critical incidents (Hunt, Tourish, and Hargie 2000; Flanagan 1948; Flanagan 1954). The premise underlying a critical incident review of this type is that it can help illuminate feelings of dissatisfaction as well as satisfaction, and provide information that can be used to improve responses to future encounters (Hargie and Tourish, 2000).

Within the descriptions in the AARs provided, sites recounted the events leading up to the incident. The description of the incident varied from an active shooter situation to a lockdown situation to a combination of both.

Sites also recounted the people and other sites involved as well as communication problems they encountered and a number of other problems. Communication problems featured prominently in the AARs, and sites commented to a great extent on the strengths and weaknesses of communication within the site and within the district as whole as well as on issues of management and communication channels.

Analytical approach

The PF undertook a grounded theory approach, exploratory in nature, to review the SBCUSD AARs. The coding was content driven, and codes were derived from the data set itself (i.e., AAR narratives). This type of methodological and analytical approach is increasingly used by researchers to “develop complex, thematic analyses in order to combine interpretative sensitivity with systematic coding” (Hunt, Tourish, and Hargie 2000; Hoijer 1990; Kepplinger 1989; Liebes and Katz 1990; Livingstone and Lunt 1994).

Furthermore, this type of approach allows for the identification of categories and subcategories that are grounded in the data and which can subsequently be used to code it. In response to the SBCUSD request, applied thematic analysis allows for the identification of common themes geared towards areas of improvement in this type of incident response.

Following is an overview of the steps taken to prepare, code, and analyze the data contained in the 94 after action reviews provided by the SBCUSD to the PF.

Overview of steps^{*}

- Organized and prepared data for analysis
- Reviewed all data to obtain a general sense of the information, and to reflect on its overall meaning (for example, identifying general issues that came up repeatedly and determining if the tone toward these issues was positive or negative)
- Began coding process, which consisted of taking text data, segmenting it into categories, and labeling those categories with language used by the participant (e.g., “communication delay”)
- Once grounded categories were identified, used these categories to code all of the text data
- Generated themes based on categories; usually major recurring categories that can be supported with data even in spite of multiple perspectives
- Depending on the extent of the analysis desired and whether description and theme identification were significant, may have done further in-depth analysis to connect themes
- Answered the questions “what are the lessons learned?” and “how can these be applied in order to improve response in future incidents?” based on interpretations of themes and exploration and consideration of their meanings

PF subject matter experts were involved in the process to tie existing lessons to those found in the review of the SBCUSD AARs. Highlights from this independent analysis are also woven into the main report.

^{*} The steps are adapted from process detailed in John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003).

Results

Once the contents of the AARs as described by the sites were classified into major categories and all of the reviews were coded within these categories, the data were examined for the frequency with which various types of incidents and experiences were mentioned by the sites.

Ninety-four AARs from 28 SBCUSD departments, 44 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, 10 high schools, and 2 debrief meetings (district and principal meetings) were obtained, coded, and analyzed (see table 1).

Table 1. Site descriptions (n=94)

Site	Number of sites	Percent (%) of sites *
SBCUSD departments	28	30
Elementary schools	44	47
Middle schools	10	11
High schools	10	11
Debrief meetings	2	2

*May add up to more than 100 because of rounding.

The AARs were coded by considering six major categories that emerged through the initial review of content. Within each category grounded in the data there were a number of subcategories that worked to refine each of the main categories. These categories and subcategories were then used to code each individual AAR (see table 2).

Table 2. Incident and event type: Identified categories and subcategories

Category	Subcategory
Nature of the incident	Shooting Mass shooting Mass killing Terrorist attack Active shooting/shooter Emergency / Off-campus emergency Bomb threats Lockdown People management Communication failure

Table 2 (cont'd)

Category	Subcategory
Too many communication sources / sources of information	District Text E-mail Social media News Parents Students Staff Community
Communication issues	Delayed communication / bad communication from the district Too many sources of communication Unofficial sources of communication No phone tree or other communication protocol Phones overwhelmed Miscommunication / unclear/lack of communication No clear chain of information More than e-mail needed for official communication Communication equipment failed (PA system)
People involved	Students Teachers Auxiliary staff Parents Media Police
Difficulties involved	Delay in notification of lockdown No lockdown protocol No active shooter protocol Unofficial sources of communication Delayed information Miscommunication Management of both on-site and off-site people Staff locked in and staff locked out Auxiliary staff not notified Not enough emergency supplies Difficulties ensuring basic needs of students during lockdown
Lessons learned	Don't forget about auxiliary staff Physical security measures need improvement Protocols and drills needed for lockdown and other emergencies Establish protocol for parental notification Update information lists

Some variation in the description of the nature of the incident did exist. Some sites (approximately 54 percent) identified the incident as the larger active shooter situation that led to the lockdown in the school district, while others (approximately 46 percent) identified and focused on the implementation of the lockdown as the main incident they were being asked to review.

Communication issues encountered

Where the incident was identified as the lockdown and its implementation, the focus of the review was largely on communication difficulties encountered as well as failures in communication (see table 3).

Table 3. Communications issues encountered and failures in communication reported (n=94)

Issue	Number of sites	Percent (%) of sites
Delayed communication / bad communication from district	38	40
Too many sources of communication / unofficial sources / miscommunication (unclear or lack)	64	68
No communication protocol / Communication protocol needed	33	35
Communication equipment failed (e.g., PA system)	16	17

Concern was expressed over delayed communication or bad communication from the district in 38 sites (40 percent); too many sources of communication or unofficial sources of communication or miscommunication in 64 sites (68 percent); need for a communication protocol in 33 sites (35 percent); and failures in communication due to equipment issues in 16 sites (17 percent). For example, across the sites that reported issues with communication equipment, the main issue was that notifications delivered via the PA were inaudible to teachers and students who were locked in their classrooms because of the lockdown order.

“Locked doors even though announcements could not be heard . . . we had to open the door to hear announcements.”

— Arrowview Middle School

In a number of the AARs, the sites were motivated to provide suggestions for a communication protocol. Among the suggestions made, 13 sites (14 percent) thought that an alert such as a bell or code word would be a good idea because the teachers could respond without alarming students; however, there were also some concerns that non-staff persons in the buildings would not be familiar with a code word.

Fifteen sites (16 percent) also suggested having a clear chain of official information as part of a communication protocol, and 8 sites (9 percent) noted that having a template with the necessary details appropriate for dissemination would be very helpful.

The lockdown notification distributed via e-mail appeared to be problematic for two reasons. For one, the timing of the notification coincided with lunch periods or recess periods for various sites, so a number of people were away from their computers and were not immediately aware of the lockdown. In addition, it seems that a number auxiliary staff members may not have had access to district e-mails or computers, so those staff members were also unaware.

“Substitute teacher could not get e-mail updates from district or school (only when called).”

— Bob Holcomb Elementary

Because of the timing of the lockdown notification and the difficulties experienced with e-mail notification of the lockdown, 24 sites (26 percent) suggested the district employ more than one form of notification for lockdowns and other emergency notifications.

Good communication

Seven sites reported good communication experiences: (1) Charter School Operations, (2) College and Career Readiness and Linked Learning, (3) Barton Elementary, (4) Bradley Elementary, (5) Monterey Elementary, (6) Richardson Prep Hi Middle School, and (7) Sierra High School. While many of these sites also mention room for improvement, they all note appreciation for the level of communication they did have whether at the site or district level or with the school police.

“All of the communication by district and our own office was extremely helpful.”

—Bradley Elementary School

Difficulties encountered

The main difficulties encountered by the sites were associated with the lockdown process, managing people both on site and off site, and the lack of contingency supplies and plans for ensuring the basic needs of students during the lockdown.

Issues associated with lockdown process

The lockdown process proved to be problematic for sites for a number of reasons (see table 4). In particular, six sites (6 percent) reported having no lockdown protocol or characterized the protocol and procedure as being inconsistent or unclear. There was widely reported confusion across the sites over the difference between a lockdown order and a lockout order. This may have been an inadvertent use of two words to refer to the same process, but more than one-third of the sites (35 percent) found this to be problematic primarily because of the confusion it caused. At the same time, 14 sites (15 percent) called an internal lockdown or inclement weather lockdown prior to official lockdown notification from the district for various reasons.*

“12:50 [principal] made intercom announcement ‘lockout’ doors and gates must be locked. Staff didn’t know what ‘lockout’ meant. 1:10 [principal] made announcement ‘lockdown.’”

—Lankershim Elementary School

Table 4. Issues encountered in lockdown process (n=94)

Issue	Number of sites	Percent (%) of sites
No protocol	6	6
Inconsistent/Unclear protocol/procedure	31	33
Lockdown versus lockout unclear	33	35
Protocol/Practice/Drills Needed	51	54

Because of the numerous issues encountered in the lockdown process, more than half of the sites (54 percent) reported that in addition to a clear lockdown protocol, practice and drills are also needed. Similarly, as with the communication issues encountered, sites were motivated to provide suggestions for a lockdown protocol. Among the suggestions made, 8 sites (9 percent) thought that signs and posters depicting the lockdown procedure would be helpful and 13 (14 percent) thought that severity levels indicating the need anywhere from a partial to full lockdown would be appropriate. In addition, ten sites (11 percent) thought that notification of a lockdown should be made as soon as possible, four sites

* Specifically, Anton Elementary School, Arrowhead Elementary School, Bradley Elementary School, Norton Elementary School, Riley College Prep Academy, Urbita Elementary School, and Warm Springs Elementary School called some form of inclement weather emergency. Del Rosa Elementary School, H. Frank Dominguez Elementary School, Kimbark Elementary School, Mt. Vernon Elementary School, Norton Elementary School, Parkside Elementary School, and Middle College High School all called some form of internal lockdown prior to the district notification.

(4 percent) recommended there be a clear chain of notification, and 4 sites (4 percent) also recommended having a contingency for staff persons off site who would effectively be locked out in a lockdown situation.

Management issues encountered

There were a number of management issues encountered across all 94 sites (see table 5). Nineteen sites (21 percent) reported difficulties with the management of students during the lockdown as well as after the lockdown order was lifted both on site and off site. Thirty-four sites (36 percent) reported numerous difficulties with the management of parents during the lockdown. For example, among the most widely reported issues that arose associated with parents were parents arriving to pick up children during the lockdown, aggressive parents, and parents calling into the school asking to speak to their children.

“Some parents were knocking at certain classroom doors asking for the teacher to open the door and let them take their child.”

—Riley College Prep Academy

“Parents that came and were upset at staff for not opening the doors [are] a potential safety hazard. Allowing people in and out during a lockdown causes chaos.”

—Anderson School

Table 5. Management difficulties encountered (n=94)

Management difficulty	Number of sites	Percent (%) of sites
Students	19	21
Auxiliary staff (custodial / substitutes / bus drivers / crossing guards, etc.)	20	21
Parents	34	36
Teachers	7	7
Physical site	6	6
On site	27	29
Off site	15	16
Phones	18	19
Information sources	7	7

The management of off-site staff and auxiliary staff was also an unanticipated issue encountered during the lockdown. For example, auxiliary staff and off-site staff returning to the school from field trips or from busing children were locked out because of the lockdown and did not have the necessary information on the situation, nor did they have contingency plans in place for where to go until the lockdown order was lifted. In some sites, the layout of the buildings (for example, in buildings with connected rooms) made a full lockdown impossible.

“[W]e had field trip buses and HTS [home to school] buses delivering students, and sites did not accept them. We had several buses with students sitting out in front of the school instead of being allowed to enter a secured site.”

—Transportation Department

The management of information sources and phones also proved to be a prominent issue. For example, 18 sites (19 percent) reported that phones were overwhelmed by calls from parents and the media. In at least one instance, the inability to dial outside of the area code using district phones proved problematic. As already mentioned in the section on communication issues, the large number of information sources (mostly informal or unofficial sources) proved to be a management issue for staff at the various departments and schools within the district.

Unique site differences in supplies and services needed

The lack of contingency plans for supplies and ensuring the basic needs of students in the event of a lockdown was a prominent issue across sites, but there were some unique site differences (see table 6).

Table 6. Site differences in supplies and services needed

Site type	Number of sites	Sites with differences: n (%)
SBCUSD departments	28	6 (21)
Elementary schools	44	36 (82)
Middle schools	10	3 (30)
High schools	10	9 (90)
Total	92*	54 (59)

* The two AARs from the debrief meetings are not included in this table.

Among the supplies and access to services mentioned as lacking or restricted due to the lockdown were food, water, and toileting and personal needs (see table 7). Sites reported concerns over being able to fulfill first aid needs and obtaining access to medicines stored in the nurse’s station in the event of a prolonged lockdown. As a result of the lockdown, sites also reported realizing that they had no inventory or an unknown inventory of basic supplies.

Table 7. Types of supplies and services needed (n=94)

Supplies and services	Number of sites	Percent (%) of sites
Food	25	27
Water	15	16
Toileting / Personal needs	38	40
First aid	23	24
Medicine	8	9
No inventory / Inventory unknown	1	1
Other (flashlights / batteries / keys etc.)	14	15

The most prominent site difference was in reference to toileting and personal needs for students in elementary schools. This was a widely reported difficulty encountered by teachers who had to make makeshift toilets for students out of trash cans in their classrooms. This posed a number of privacy concerns for both students and teachers. This seemed to be less of a problem for older student populations, but it was a problem nonetheless.

Lessons learned

There were a number of lessons learned and identified across sites, but among the most prominent ones were not forgetting about auxiliary staff, improving physical security measures in the buildings, establishing a system for parental notification of a lockdown and updates, and ensuring that lists were updated and accessible to all staff, including auxiliary staff (see table 8).

Table 8. Lessons learned (n=94)

Lesson learned	Number of sites	% of sites
Don't forget about auxiliary staff	19	20
Physical security measures need improvement	37	39
Lockdown and other protocols/drills needed	27	29
System for parental notification should be in place	25	27
Update lists (contact information / rosters / attendance / etc.)	12	13

For example, it was reported that at times teachers did not have access to contact information, roster information, and attendance information for their classes, which made it difficult to manage not only the students but also the parental notification process because of outdated or incomplete contact information.

“We need to update our emergency list of parent phone numbers more frequently.”

— Dr. Mildred Dalton Henry Elementary

A main lesson learned and key theme throughout the AARs was the need to have protocols in place for district staff. In addition to the lockdown protocol detailed earlier in this report, other protocols identified as necessary were an active shooter protocol, according to staff at 18 sites (19 percent); a communication protocol or plan, according to staff at 23 sites (24 percent); and a general emergency protocol, according to staff at 10 sites (11 percent).

Positive police response

While police response was not a recurring item addressed throughout the after action reviews, when it was addressed the assessment was generally positive. In particular, six sites commended the police response. These sites were (1) Accounting Services, (2) Employee Benefits and Workers' Compensation, (3) Family Resource Center, (4) Fiscal Services, (5) Anderson School, and (6) Serrano Middle School.

Interpretation/discussion/recommendations

Threat assessment

- Is the threat *internal* to the school district or to a specific school or schools? For example, is it a general bomb threat or an active shooter threat? Specific protocols should be established to respond to *internal* threats.
- Is the threat *external* to the school district or to a specific school or schools? For example, there may be criminal activity or police action in the vicinity of a school or schools that potentially threatens the safety of students, staff, and facility *or* a natural event such as a fire or flooding. Specific protocols should be developed to respond to *external* threats.
- The initial analysis of the threat will dictate what protocol(s) should be implemented at the district, school, or facility level. Consideration should be given to developing a simple and concise process to evaluate potential threat levels and communicate them within the district, schools, and facilities.
- The threat should be continuously monitored to determine the proper response over time and to reassess the threat level assigned. This would suggest that the school district employ one or more analysts to monitor threats to the safety and security of the school district on a regular basis. The analyst should produce threat assessments and communicate them in a manner consistent with protocols. It would seem the analyst should be located within the Police or Emergency Management function.
- Careful consideration based on the threat level should be given to restricting movement inside schools and facilities. The more restricted movement becomes, the more difficult it will be to gain compliance initially and over time as students and staff are unable to access supplies, medication, and toilets. Freeing up internal movement as soon as it is safe to do so should be the focus of the ongoing threat analysis.

Policy and protocol

- Protocols should be established at the local (school- and facility-specific) as well as the district level to identify alternate locations for transporting students and staff in the event that they are locked out of their school or facility. This should be a critical aspect of the preplanning process.
- The district should develop and implement active shooter protocols and drills. Consideration should be given to engaging parents, parent organizations, or representatives in the drills and protocol development. If it is done properly, parental involvement will increase transparency, build trust, identify communication strategies, and improve interactions and collaboration during an event.

Communications

- Consideration should be given to the robust use of social media for information gathering, information dissemination, and public relations. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has a full-time employee charged with monitoring social media and disseminating information. That individual played a critical role during the terrorist attack as well as doing so on a routine basis. Because communication was identified as a critical issue, the district should explore creating a similar position within the public information and affairs office, the office of emergency management, or the police department.
- Social media provides an invaluable opportunity to communicate with staff, parents, and others. Information can be pushed out rapidly and continuously updated. In addition, it can provide an opportunity to identify emerging issues and challenges and to answer questions in real time.
- Other options for communication could include a 1-800 phone number, a proactive automated calling system (for which it would be essential to have a complete and regularly updated contact list), or a version of a storm warning or Amber alert system.

Conclusion

The school district is fortunate to have an outstanding police department and office of emergency management, both of which provided significant support during the terrorist attack. The school district should continue to build on the success and expertise of the police and the office of emergency management.

In conclusion, the efforts being made in the school district and the level of importance that being placed on these important issues are encouraging. The fourth CompStat principle is relentless assessment and follow up, which suggests that this is a continuous process that requires a dedicated and knowledgeable staff with situational awareness, preplans and protocols, threat assessment capabilities, social media expertise, and the commitment to monitor and adjust policies, practices, and procedures on a regular and continuing basis.

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About the Authors

San Bernardino Critical Response project team (subject matter experts)

Sheriff Rod Hoops (Ret.) provided law enforcement and public administrator subject matter expertise to the project. A 34-year veteran of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department (SBCSD) in southern California, Hoops served as Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator from 2009 until his retirement in December 2012. As sheriff, Hoops increased the diversity and educational achievement levels of command staff and instituted a shared-leadership strategy to empower decision making by commanders at the local level. Over the course of his 34-year career, Hoops served as the assistant sheriff overseeing SBCSD operations and as deputy chief and chief of police in numerous cities served by the department. From 2008 to 2009, he was chairman of the Los Angeles High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (LA-HIDTA). Hoops holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a master's degree in public administration from California State University–Fullerton and is a graduate of the California Command College.

Chief Rick Braziel (Ret.) provided law enforcement expertise as well as Critical Response and Collaborative Reform experience to the project. He has been an executive fellow of the Police Foundation for three years and has been the team leader on two of the Police Foundation's critical incident reviews. Braziel served as chief of the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) from 2008 until his retirement in December 2012. A 33-year veteran of the SPD, including 18 years as a member of the executive leadership team, he held a variety of ranks. As deputy chief, his assignments included the Office of Operations, Office of Investigations, Office of Technical Services, and Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. Braziel also served as president of the California Peace Officers Association, and treasurer of the Police Executive Research Forum and as a member of the California Police Chiefs Association Board of Directors and the Salvation Army advisory board. He also served as chair of the Central California Intelligence Center Governance Board. He was recently appointed by Governor Jerry Brown to the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). Braziel is currently Inspector General for Sacramento County.

Braziel received his BA and MA in Communication Studies from California State University–Sacramento. In 2006, he received a masters of arts in Security Studies from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. His thesis resulted in a \$3.1 million grant toward the creation of communities of learning. In addition to numerous commendations, Braziel received the City of Sacramento Silver Medal of Valor in 1988, Distinguished Service Award in 2001, and a Unit Citation in 2002. He was named 1995 Alumnus of the Year by California State University–Sacramento. Braziel coauthored *Cop Talk: Essential Communication Skills for Community Policing*.*

* Virginia Kidd and Rick Braziel, *COP Talk: Essential Communication Skills for Community Policing* (San Francisco: Acada Books, 1999).

Chief Frank Straub (Ret.), PhD, provided on-site project management, coordinating the work of subject matter experts and providing law enforcement guidance and expertise to the project. He managed the document review process and worked closely with Jennifer Zeunik to ensure that all on- and off-site decisions and activities met project goals. A 30-year veteran of law enforcement, Dr. Straub currently serves as the Director of Strategic Studies for the Police Foundation. He last served as the chief of the Spokane (Washington) Police Department, where he received national recognition for the major reforms and community policing programs he implemented and significant crime reductions achieved during his tenure. Dr. Straub also served as director of public safety for the City of Indianapolis, Indiana, during which time the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department reduced homicides to the lowest level in 20 years. Dr. Straub has also served as the public safety commissioner for the City of White Plains, New York, where his department reduced serious crime by 40 percent. He established the first police-community mental health response team in Westchester County to proactively assist persons challenged by mental illness, homelessness, and domestic violence. Dr. Straub previously served as the deputy commissioner of training for the New York City Police Department and as a federal agent. He holds a BA in Psychology from St. John's University, and MA in Forensic Psychology from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and a PhD in Criminal Justice from the City University of New York's Graduate Center. He co-authored a book on performance-based police management and has published several articles regarding community policing, police reform, and jail management.

George Watson provided media, community relations, and writing expertise to the project. He spent more than two decades building a career as an acclaimed journalist and public official. These two professions give him a unique expertise in media and community relations, handling a crisis while also specializing in helping people build their public identities and manage their reputations. Watson worked for 18 years in daily journalism, writing and editing for some of the largest and smallest newspapers and websites across the United States. He anchored the Associated Press's metro desk in New York City, wrote for *The New York Times*, and won a handful of national awards for investigative work in southern California. He has covered mass shootings, officer-involved incidents, and serial killers; reported from Afghanistan; and also spent time at Ground Zero in the days after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. He has used blogs and other social media to cover both breaking news and larger in-depth pieces while also anchoring a newspaper's live web coverage of local and national elections.

In 2009, Watson became chief of staff for a member of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. For four years, Watson led the office for a county that is home to 2.4 million people while directing all media and public interaction. The supervisor was commended for the office's use of social media to connect directly with the public, providing easy-to-understand information to constituents and also showing a level of public service and interaction rarely seen from a politician. Watson is a graduate of Hobart College.

Police Foundation project staff*

Jim Bueermann, President, is local to San Bernardino and provided executive oversight of the project.

Blake Norton, VP/COO, provided high-level strategy and coordination and served as the primary liaison to the COPS Office throughout the project.

Jennifer Zeunik, Director of Programs, provided overall project structure and oversight. She worked with project staff in driving toward goals and deliverables and coordinated activity of on- and off-site staff and SMEs. Zeunik also served as a writer and quality control manager on the final report.

Rebecca Benson, Senior Policy Analyst, provided project support; document writing, review, and editing; and technical and mapping support.

Ben Gorban, Policy Analyst, provided project support as well as document writing, review, and editing.

Joyce Iwashita, Project Assistant, provided project support; document writing, review, and editing; and technical and mapping support.

* Project staff bios can be found at <http://www.policefoundation.org>.

About the Police Foundation

The Police Foundation is a national nonmember, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that has been providing technical assistance and conducting innovative research on policing for nearly 45 years.

The professional staff at the Police Foundation works closely with law enforcement, community members, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and victim advocates to develop research, comprehensive reports, policy briefs, model policies, and innovative programs. The organization's ability to connect client departments with subject matter expertise, supported by sound data analysis practices, makes us uniquely positioned to provide critical response and technical assistance (CRTA).

The Police Foundation has been on the forefront of researching and providing guidance on community policing practices since 1985. Acceptance of constructive change by police and the community is central to the purpose of the Police Foundation. From its inception, the Police Foundation has understood that in order to flourish, police innovation requires an atmosphere of trust; a willingness to experiment and exchange ideas both within and outside the police structure; and, perhaps most importantly, a recognition of the common stake of the entire community in better police services.

The Police Foundation prides itself in a number of core competencies that provide the foundation for CRTA, including a history of conducting rigorous research and strong data analysis, an Executive Fellows program that provides access to some of the strongest thought leaders and experienced law enforcement professionals in the field, and leadership with a history of exemplary technical assistance program management.

About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community police and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Another source of COPS Office assistance is the Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance (CRI-TA). Developed to advance community policing and ensure constitutional practices, CRI-TA is an independent, objective process for organizational transformation. It provides recommendations based on expert analysis of policies, practices, training, tactics, and accountability methods related to issues of concern.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 127,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.
- The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement.

The COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—can be downloaded at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

In December 2015, two terrorists attacked a training session and holiday party for San Bernardino County employees, killing 14 and wounding 24 including two police officers. But further losses were averted by the response of the police department, sheriff's office, emergency services, and FBI, who came together to prevent additional deaths and injuries.

With a grant from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), the Police Foundation critically, objectively, and thoroughly examined all aspects of the public safety response—including preparation and aftermath—and prepared this critical incident review of the events surrounding the shooting.

This review provides a detailed overview of the incident response; lessons learned to improve responding agencies' policies, procedures, tactics, systems, culture, and relationships; and guidance to other agencies and first responders as they prepare for responses to terrorist, active shooter or other hostile events, and mass casualty incidents.



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