ACCREDITATION TIPS
CRITICAL TASKING:
Gathering the Resources to Accomplish the Tasks

Critical tasking plays an important role in determining and assigning the appropriate resources to specific tactical assignments based on risk. If the agency is not trained or equipped to mitigate certain types of incidents, automatic/mutual aid is then included in calculating the critical tasks assignments to achieve the effective response force (ERF).

Determining Response Capabilities

The first undertaking an agency must complete is to establish the capabilities to respond to and mitigate all incidents based on risk. One method to accomplish this is to initiate a resource inventory. Every agency understands its own capabilities and what type of incidents can be mitigated by the agency. A resource inventory includes the assets available to an agency, including automatic/mutual aid that can respond to and assist at an incident. This is easily accomplished and is not based on the size of the agency but based on the resources available, either internally or with the use of automatic/mutual aid.

A resource inventory can be completed whether an agency is fully paid, combination, or volunteer. It incorporates:

- Staffing
- Availability and reliability to respond
- Travel distances and terrain
- Training
- Communications
- Pre-fire plans

Other factors that must be considered include:

- Population density; urban and rural areas
- Community demographics include residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and historic areas
- Critical infrastructure: electrical distribution, natural gas, water delivery, and transportation

All this combined information can assist in development of the blueprint for determining and assigning the appropriate resources to complete the critical tasks.

The Critical Task to Resource, Response, and Capability Connection

Let's dissect the connection among critical task, available resources, response, and capability a little further. Again, this can be determined regardless of the size or complexity of the agency.

Considerations include:

- *Staffing:* Number of personnel on a piece of apparatus.
- *Availability/Reliability:* What percentage of the time is the apparatus and crew available to respond promptly?
- *Travel Distance/Terrain:* How long will it take for the resource to arrive at the incident?
- *Training:* Are response personnel trained to the level of the assigned task?
- *Communications:* Is it seamless or are there inherent delays due to multiple communications centers involved in dispatching resources?

Critical Tasking

Using the criteria above, let's assemble the critical tasks that need to be accomplished based on two common incidents using community-driven deployment models. It should be noted that agency specific deployment should be based on minimum staffing as that is the most consistent approach to reaching an Effective Response Force (ERF).

Scenario: Moderate risk structure fire

Assumption: All resources are available

Initial Task Assignments:	Incident Command/Safety	1
	Fire Attack, 1st Line	2
	Back Up, 2nd Line	2
	Water Supply/Operators	2
	Ventilation/Utilities	4
	Search	3
	Rapid Intervention Crew	3
	Total	*17*

ERF: 17 personnel assigned to the initial critical tasks

Scenario: Moderate risk technical rescue

Assumption: All resources are available

Initial Task Assignments:		
	Incident Command/Safety	1
	Extrication/Rescue Group	4
	Suppression/Safety Line	2
	Patient Care/Transport	2
	Water Supply/Operator	1
	Support Functions	2
	Total	*12*

ERF: 12 personnel assigned to the initial critical tasks

Let's circle back to the resource, response, and capability connection to see how an agency will determine how it will assemble the resources, the appropriate number of personnel to achieve the ERF, and make sure that all critical tasks are accomplished.

Staffing: What is the minimum number of personnel that typically respond to an incident on a resource (engine, truck, squad, ambulance, other), 2, 3, 4?

Impact: May have to send additional resources if staffing is too low to meet ERF.

Availability/Reliability: What is the percentage of time the resource(s) will be available?

Impact: If the reliability factor of the resource is less than 90%, that resource may be unavailable on a regular basis to respond, delaying the ability to establish the ERF.

Travel Distance/Terrain: In rural areas the travel distance and terrain must be considered. In urban areas, traffic calming devices, heavy traffic and gridlock will impact this time?

Impact: Can cause delays in response. Do additional resources get added to the initial dispatch due to the potential travel time delay?

Training: Are agency personnel and automatic/mutual aid partners training together on a regular basis?

Impact: It's imperative personnel are trained in the task assigned. If your agency isn't trained in certain specialties (auto extrication, hazardous materials, below-grade rescue, water tender operations, etc.), where does the agency get those resources and how long will it take to respond to an incident?

Communications: Are there any delays in call processing and alerting all responders of the incident? If a second dispatch center is involved for automatic/mutual aid, what additional time is necessary to properly request those other resources?

Impact: Considerable delays can and will occur based on information transfer.

Conclusion

Each agency must determine what critical tasks need to be accomplished to mitigate the emergency being reported. Identifying the critical tasks for each risk type requires an agency to work together with their operational staff using industry standards and outcome expectations to prioritize and balance response assignment.
Critical tasking may change based on the level of risk, complexity, and specifics of the emergency. By taking time in advance of an incident, every agency can assemble the resources necessary to accomplish the critical tasks, fulfill the Effective Response Force, and safely mitigate the incident.