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LESSON LEARNED

Incident Management: Assigning a Liaison to Coordinate with Incoming Assets When Relocating the Incident Command Post

SUMMARY

When relocating an incident command post (ICP), incident commanders should consider assigning a liaison officer to coordinate with incoming response agencies. This can help ensure an effective transition when the ICP moves to the new location.

DESCRIPTION

On Saturday, January 8, 2011, at 10:10 a.m. Mountain Standard Time, a gunman opened fire on U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords and a group of citizens attending her "Congress on Your Corner" event in front of a Safeway supermarket in Tucson, Arizona. The gunman fired 31 rounds, killing 6 people and wounding Representative Giffords and 12 others. U.S. District Judge John M. Roll and Gabriel M. Zimmerman, a staff member for Representative Giffords, were among those killed. Citizens acted immediately to detain the gunman while congressional staff and two doctors, who were shopping at the Safeway, provided first aid to the victims. Pima County 911 operators received the first call from the incident scene at 10:11 a.m. A Pima County Sheriff's Department (PCSD) deputy arrived on site at 10:15 a.m., detained the suspect, and established the ICP at his patrol car. A second deputy arrived soon after and secured the shooter's weapon.

During the initial stages of the response, the incident commander directed tactical operations from his patrol car. The incident commander utilized the trunk of his patrol car and a dry-erase marker to sketch out a diagram of the incident scene and to list incoming personnel and their duty assignments, responder contact numbers, and other essential response information. The use of the trunk of the patrol car proved very successful for managing initial response operations.

PCSD moved the ICP to a nearby restaurant after response operations became more complex and a unified command was established. The new ICP location provided incident command with the necessary resources to manage assets



PCSD Patrol Car as the ICP

from multiple response agencies and effectively integrate them into the unified command structure. These resources included Internet access, tables, and electrical outlets for equipment.

Approximately 30 minutes were required to relocate the ICP from the patrol car to the restaurant about 100 yards away. Senior incident command staff moved to the new ICP, leaving some personnel at the patrol car. However, senior staff did not formally assign a liaison officer to coordinate with incoming assets at the initial ICP. As a result, mutual aid responders continued to report to the patrol car because they had not been informed that the ICP had been relocated. According to PCSD Captain Byron Gwaltney, "There was just about half an hour of movement time during which we were transitioning that created some confusion for a very small number of people." After response operations concluded, PCSD decided that it would assign a liaison officer to direct incoming response assets whenever an ICP is relocated. This will help ensure that incoming mutual aid responders can report to the proper location.

For more information about establishing initial ICPs, please refer to the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov)* Lessons Learned, [Incident Command: Locating the Incident Command Post](#), and also [Active Shooter Response Operations: Establishing an Incident Command Post](#).

When relocating an ICP, incident commanders should consider assigning a liaison officer to coordinate with incoming response agencies. This can help ensure an effective transition when the ICP moves to the new location.

CITATIONS

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