

Police CBRN consultancy

Psychology of crowd behaviour and public disorder

- Crowd behaviour is meaningful, limited
- Different crowds have different identities (i.e. norms, values and aims)
- Knowledge based policing means understanding the identity of each crowd
- Certain police practices can contribute to disorder through:
 - Empowering a crowd (turning an aggregate into a unity)
 - Legitimizing anti-police elements
- Successful policing of potentially disorderly crowds involves
 - Communication of police aims
 - Facilitating the crowd's legitimate aims in order to empower self-policing in the majority
 - A graded response to potential disorder

Psychology of mass emergencies and disasters

- The myth of mass panic
- If mass emergency crowd behaviour is meaningful then
 - The importance of communication/ information/ explanation/ openness (lack of communication creates distrust – reverse 'crying wolf' syndrome)
 - The importance to communication of trust (definition of self, ingroup, and context)
- Maintaining endogenous orderliness through form of messages
 - E.g. problem of 'don't panic' messages
- The prevalence of solidarity
- The public desire to help
 - Managing public involvement (delays and interference versus constructive allies)
- Natural resilience needs to be facilitated not inhibited
- Enhancing resilience through promoting existing unity (practices, language)
- Danger of turning a public safety situation into one of public disorder (see above)

Specificity of managing crowd behaviour in CBRN incidents

Invisibility of the threat

- more frightening
- less evident (plausibility, credibility)

Quarantine and containment (not dispersal/starburst)

- Issues of legitimacy
- Potential for conflict
- communication / information / explanation / trust become even more important!
- Treating crowd / public as a resource (as above) becomes even more important!

Potential for CBRN incident to affect whole population not just a crowd

- Different sections of the public may require different treatments/ vaccination (e.g., variability in susceptibility to pandemics)
- Different sections of the public have different relationships to the police/ authorities

Managing scarcity

- After effects of CBRN incident, unlike other kinds of disaster/ emergency, could create disunity in the public around access to scarce resources

Technology/ equipment issues

- Problem of 'alien' protective suits for emergency services who seek to gain trust of public

Key issues

Crowd as potential problem versus crowd as potential solution?

These issues are relevant not only for Bronze command etc but just as much for the most junior officers on the ground

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