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The Basics of Emergency Services & Related Chaplaincy Ministry

Introduction to Chaplaincy

The world of chaplaincy is exploding. Every time you turn around, you see chaplaincy expanding into another ministry area. It would be fair to say that chaplaincy began with spiritual men serving alongside the military. But it has grown to be much bigger than that. Now we have chaplains serving at horse racing tracks, motor speedways, among motorcycle clubs, among long-haul truck drivers, in manufacturing plants, in large corporations – the list goes on and on. Lately, I've become acquainted with chaplains to rock climbers, to triathlon athletes, and even to the Mixed Martial Arts community in Las Vegas!

In order to be effective in ministry, the chaplain must learn a lot. To be a chaplain in the military is different than being a chaplain to a college football team or to a professional soccer team. Though chaplaincy is primarily a "ministry of presence," there are opportunities to speak into the lives of the spiritually lost and also minister to Christians who are discouraged or going through a crisis of some kind.

The fact is that there has been a long-standing tradition for chaplains serving in the world

of emergency services. This is especially true of chaplains serving in fire departments and in law enforcement agencies. Chaplaincy within emergency services holds an increasingly significant role in today's world, which is full of crisis and loss.

For our purposes, *emergency services* includes fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services departments, and emergency dispatch centers. We might even include the offices of Coroners and Medical Examiners. Even within emergency services, there are differences in the history, culture and jargon for each major division. As you move forward in your quest to become an emergency services chaplain, you will need to know a little something about the particular area in which you will serve. How is each of these divisions of emergency services unique?

INTRODUCTION TO EMERGENCY SERVICES

In our full-length course entitled *Introduction to Emergency Services* we present each of the four major divisions of emergency services and some of the ways they are alike and ways they differ. It is a four-hour course and contains a good summary of the history and culture of world of emergency services. Here is a sampling of that course.

What is an emergency? The word *emergency* comes from the original sense of “an emerging.” *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines an emergency as “a sudden or generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances demanding immediate action.” The conclusion that an emergency exists is often a subjective determination. Whether an emergency really exists may depend on the opinion of the person(s) experiencing the event and their past experiences. To classify something as an emergency may be rooted in just a feeling or someone's interpretation.

What is a true emergency in the world of emergency services? A *true emergency* is an emergency in which lives or property are at significant risk. A true emergency is a *priority one* call. Once a call is deemed a priority one, it is dispatched immediately and receives priority treatment by responders.

Emergency Services Personnel

What motivates emergency services personnel? Most emergency services applicants have one or more experiences in their past that motivate them to work in this field. It may have been a sibling who died or a parent who was saved. It may have been that they saw an emergency scene and admired the work of the responders. It could have been that they were called on to help in an emergency and felt their assistance was inadequate. People who want to be *heroes* generally do not make good emergency services personnel.

What are emergency services workers paid? According to www.payscale.com, the average emergency services worker earns approximately \$40,000 to \$45,000 per year. However, this is an average for workers with from 0 to 20 years of experience. Their compensation varies widely depending on their experience, the area of the country, and the type of agency in which they serve (governmental, private, etc). Beginning pay can range from \$20,000 to \$35,000. FROM > www.payscale.com

How does stress affect emergency services personnel? According to the *United States Fire Administration's Stress Management Model Program for Firefighter Well-Being Report*, "Stress is one of the most serious occupational hazards in the fire service, affecting health, job performance, career decision-making, morale, and family life. Emotional problems, as well as problems with alcohol and drugs, are becoming increasingly evident. High rates of attrition, divorce, occupational disease, and injury continue." This would also be true of law enforcement, EMS, and emergency communications personnel. FROM > <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa-100.pdf>

Emergency Services Operations

How do emergency services departments know what to do in a variety of predictable situations? Emergency services departments develop what are called *standard operating procedures* (SOP) or *guidelines* (SOG). They attempt to predict situations that a responder will encounter and set out guidelines as to how they should respond.

What is meant by *chain of command*? *Chain of command* originated as an element of a management style used by the armed services. This military style of management establishes lines of authority and rank. The rank structure, lower to higher, is: private, corporal, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major, colonel, and general. Lower ranks are answerable to all the ranks above them. In many, if not all, emergency services organizations a variation of this management style is used. We call these organizations *para-military*. That is, they are non-military organizations using a military management system.

Emergency Vehicle Operations

What does it mean to run code? *Running code* is a phrase used to indicate that an emergency vehicle is using its siren and/or emergency lights.

Does using emergency lights and siren authorize a person to drive as fast as they want, anywhere they want, with everyone else required to get out of their way? No. Running a vehicle with lights and siren carries with it a great deal of personal responsibility and liability, including the possibility of criminal prosecution and jail time. It also exposes the responder's department to potential liability. In the fire service and in EMS, the use of lights and siren vehicle operation is reserved for emergency services workers who are responding to a *true emergency*; that is, where lives and/or property are at significant risk.

The Fire Service

What is the purpose of the fire service? The stated purpose of the fire service is to save lives and protect property. Fire departments also attempt to educate people in their community about the potential dangers of fire and steps they can take to minimize danger from fire and smoke.

When and where did the fire service begin? In 23 BC, Caesar Augustus created the first firefighting force in Rome. This was followed some years later by the formation of *Vigils* in that city. They were used both for fire suppression and military purposes. This is recognized as the first organized firefighting force.

What education and training is required to become a firefighter? Each fire department has its own initial criteria for becoming a firefighter. Rural, volunteer fire departments usually have few if any training requirements for a person to join. However, most will require a new *firefighter* to complete a basic firefighter course within the first year of joining. It is common for these departments to also have a probationary period for new firefighters. In this probationary period, often six months, the new firefighter is allowed limited participation in firefighting and other emergency operations. It would be common for a department NOT to allow a “probie” to drive fire apparatus or run code in his/her personal vehicle during the probationary period. At the end of the probationary period, the department leaders would decide whether to retain the “probie” as a full-fledged firefighter.

What are some of the behavioral characteristics common to the culture of the fire service and its personnel that may differ from the culture as a whole? Firefighters are normal people doing a job that requires great courage. Most firefighters are highly dedicated. They manage their fear and come quickly when we need them. They face life and death situations regularly. One of the ways personnel attempt to deal with such dramatically appalling situations is “dark humor.” Having just completed their duties on a medical call where someone dies, they may remark on unusual things that happened during the call or on another recent call. Regular citizens, non-emergency responders, might say, “How can you joke about something so tragic?” Actually, it is a way to distance themselves from the events – a way to protect themselves from feeling the emotions that might otherwise come. Many of their unique behavioral characteristics are their attempts to manage the challenges and stresses that come with the job.

Law Enforcement

What is the purpose of law enforcement? The stated purpose of law enforcement is *to protect and to serve*. Most civilized societies have norms of behavior that have been established over the years. If everyone would voluntarily comply with these norms, then, theoretically, laws and law enforcement would not be necessary. But not everyone is disciplined enough to do what is right. So, officers are trained in the law and in techniques

of enforcement to help a society and its citizens live in peace. *Liberty and justice for all* is their goal.

What education and training is required to become a law enforcement officer? Many departments have educational entrance requirements. A person may be required to be a high school graduate in one department, and another department might require two years of college. After being accepted, recruits are required by most states to attend a law enforcement academy BEFORE they may exercise the powers of a law enforcement officer. The number of hours required varies greatly from state to state, but would almost certainly be a minimum of several hundred hours and maybe up to 400 hours or more of classroom and practical training. FROM > A variety of Internet sources, google: law enforcement training requirements.

What are some of the characteristics that are common to the culture of law enforcement and its personnel? There are several traits that can be seen as common among those in law enforcement. Again, for the most part, law enforcement personnel are highly dedicated to their work. First, an officer's main duty is that of enforcer. Their very presence, whether in their vehicle or standing in their uniform, is generally accepted as the first level of the use of force. If all is well and everyone is behaving as they should, the presence of an officer is still valuable. Their presence alone may help to maintain order and peace. In order to do their job, many officers feel it necessary to maintain an appearance of harshness and even meanness. The implication is that their strength and enforcement ability are ready at a moment's notice to be unleashed on the law-breaker. Their theory is that those who aren't doing anything wrong have nothing to worry about. However, some intentionally invoke fear in those who see them. One should understand that the appearance of sternness an officer maintains may be related to his/her ability to do the job. Sometimes it is good to remember that the definition of meekness is strength that is harnessed, or under control. These two aspects – strength and control – are both extremely necessary in law enforcement.

Emergency Medical Services

What does EMS mean? EMS stands for emergency medical services.

What is the history of EMS? Prior to the 1970s, ambulance service was largely unregulated. While in some areas ambulances were staffed by advanced first-aid-level responders, in other areas, it was common for the local undertaker, having the only transport in town in which one could lie down, to operate both the their funeral home and the local ambulance service. However, after the release of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's study, *Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society*, a concerted effort was undertaken to improve emergency medical care in the pre-hospital setting. In this study, it became apparent that many of the deaths occurring every day were unnecessary, and could be prevented through a combination of community education, stricter safety standards, and better pre-hospital treatments.

In the late 1960's, Dr. Adam Cowley was instrumental in the creation of the country's first statewide EMS program in Maryland. Also in 1969, Cowley obtained a helicopter to assist in rapidly transporting patients. This service was not only the first statewide EMS program, but also the beginning of modern emergency medical helicopter transport in the United States.

What education and training are required to become an ambulance attendant? Each EMS employer decides the pre-hiring educational requirements of its EMS job applicants. They would generally not require greater than a high school diploma or GED. A person wanting to be an ambulance attendant must have completed the training for their EMT-Basic (or above), pre-hospital emergency medical license. An EMT-B license requires 100 to 120 hours of instruction in a state-certified training program. A paramedic (EMT-P) must complete 1,000 or more hours of training.

What are some of the characteristics that are common to the culture of emergency medical services and its personnel? “Mitchell and Bray (1990) describe emergency response workers as inner-directed, action oriented, obsessed with high standards of performance, easily bored, and highly dedicated. In addition, these authors describe emergency workers as people who like control, both of the situation and themselves, and enjoy being needed.” FROM > <http://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2005-2/wagner.htm>

Emergency Communications & Dispatching

When and where did emergency communications/dispatching begin? A person could say that emergency communications began the first time someone yelled, “Help!”

Electronic emergency communications began with police *call boxes*, which were direct phone lines to a local police station. Later officers were *dispatched* via a broadcast-only AM radio signal they received via the AM radio that came standard in cars of that period. The use of trained communicators in emergency services began with people who were retiring from military service entering the civilian job market. They were trained and experienced communicators and fit well into this emerging profession. FROM > [Managing the 9-1-1 Center](#), pages 19 – 22.

What education and training is required to become an emergency communicator?

“Candidates for positions with police, fire, and emergency medical dispatching positions usually must pass written, oral and performance exams. Most positions within these organizations do not require more than a high school diploma. However, those with training in office and business settings are given special consideration. These skills can be obtained by completing various associate degree programs at a community college. Beyond that, workers develop most of the necessary skills on the job and in employer-sponsored training and certification classes.

Communication skills and a keen ability to work under pressure are important qualities to possess. Residency in the city or county of employment may be required. There are no mandatory licensing or certification requirements, but some states require emergency services dispatchers to earn a certificate to work at the state level.”

FROM > http://education-portal.com/articles/Emergency_Services_Dispatcher:_Educational_Requirements_for_an_Emergency_911_Dispatcher.html

What are some of the characteristics that are common to the culture of emergency dispatch and its personnel? A great deal of dedication is required to be a good dispatcher. The stress that dispatchers encounter in their jobs often makes the use of tobacco products quite common. Dispatchers tend to be quite verbal and can also be quite

assertive when it is necessary. They also tend to seek out others within emergency services with whom to relate.

SUMMARY – for Introduction to Emergency Services Section

It goes without question that the world of emergency services is a culture within a culture. Emergency services personnel face unique challenges and ways of adapting to those challenges that set them apart. They are a much-needed and sometimes under-appreciated element of our society. And yet, in many ways, we could not function without them. Their needs differ in many ways from the rest of the working world. As a people group, they require specialized ministry if they are to be reached, disciplined, and sustained in their Christian walk.

INTRODUCTION TO EMERGENCY SERVICES CHAPLAINCY

In our full-length course entitled *Introduction to Emergency Services Chaplaincy* we present the essential knowledge of how chaplaincy functions within emergency services. It is a four-hour course and contains many helps for a person functioning in a chaplaincy role. Here is a sampling of that course.

Defining Emergency Services Chaplaincy

What is a chaplain? A chaplain is typically a priest, pastor, ordained deacon, rabbi, imam, or other member of the clergy serving a group of people who are not organized as a mission or church, or who are unable to attend church for various reasons. For example, a chaplain is often attached to a military unit, a private chapel, a ship, a hospital, a high school, college or boarding school, even a parliamentary assembly, and so on. Though originally the word *chaplain* was a Christian term, it is also now applied to people in other religions filling the same role. In recent years, many non-ordained persons have received professional training in chaplaincy and are now appointed as chaplains in schools, hospitals, universities, prisons. and elsewhere to work alongside or instead of ordained chaplains.

What is an emergency services chaplain? An *emergency services chaplain* is a person who works with and serves the needs of emergency responders (fire, law enforcement, EMS, and dispatch) and the needs of citizens in their times of crisis.

How is a chaplain different from a pastor or other ministers? A pastor is a minister who usually serves as the spiritual and administrative leader of a church. As leaders, pastors often have significant influence and control over the direction of the organization and over their own ministry. They are able to set or strongly influence the day-to-day culture in which they work. For example, they set the moral standards of conduct for participation and are able to determine what types of behavior are allowed. A pastor or youth pastor most often ministers to people who come to their places of worship seeking spiritual input. These seekers usually understand the types of behaviors expected at church and tend to conform to those expectations while in attendance.

Chaplains normally serve as a staff person in an organization or group to which they minister. They generally do not serve as group or organizational leaders, and are therefore subject to the supervision of others. These groups or organizations are often not spiritually homogeneous and may have little, if any, spiritual leanings. Chaplains find that the people to whom they minister generally gather together for reasons other than to receive spiritual input, so chaplains are often seen as taking faith to people who might not have strong faith beliefs of their own.

How is an emergency services chaplain different from a military chaplain?

There are some close similarities between an emergency services chaplain and those chaplains who serve our military. Both function in a military or para-military management system and both function as staff, and not operational officers. One main difference is that emergency services chaplains have greater potential impact on the civilian population. Where military chaplains minister almost exclusively to soldiers and their families, emergency services chaplains are afforded additional opportunities beyond their ministry to responders, and may have the opportunity to have dramatic impact on citizens affected by a crisis.

Are chaplains paid for the services they render? Some chaplains are paid. Military

chaplains are given a rank and are paid according to that rank just like any other person in the military. There are also other chaplaincy positions that are paid. Hospital chaplains, corporate chaplains, and some emergency services chaplains are paid for their services. However, the vast majority of emergency services chaplains are unpaid volunteers.

What are the qualifications for being an emergency services chaplain?

The short answer to that question is this: The qualifications to be an emergency services chaplain are whatever the chief (in fire or law enforcement) or director, (in EMS or dispatch) says they are. If the chief wants a person with a doctorate in practical ministry, then that is one of the qualifications. If they say a chaplain must live in the district, then they must live in the district, etc.

Our experience is that many chiefs and/or department leaders do not know, nor have they developed, a set of qualifications for a chaplain. Unless they have an ongoing chaplaincy program, they often do not know enough about a chaplain or chaplaincy to make the determination as to what qualifications they will require of a chaplain. They will often depend upon an incoming chaplain to help them figure it all out. Further information and suggestions as to what the qualifications for a chaplain should be, can be found in our material on *Developing Standard Operating Guidelines for Emergency Services Chaplains*.

The Role of an Emergency Services Chaplain

What is the role of a chaplain in an emergency services department? The ministry of a chaplain is primarily a *ministry of presence*. Chaplains regularly spend time around the men and women of the department they serve. For each emergency services agency, how much time the chaplain spends with the emergency personnel varies greatly. We suggest that successful chaplains should be well-known and readily recognized by those they serve. Not always, but regularly, they may be present when the others' day begins; that is, at shift change and/or at their briefing, if applicable. They are there when the others are training. They are there on emergency scenes with responders. They are there when the adrenaline is wearing off from an especially stressful call. They are there when the group gets together for special events, and they are there when someone in their department

needs someone to talk to. This is what we mean by a ministry of presence. They are there!

They spend a lot of time observing - observing the different personalities within the department. They intuitively know when someone is “not himself/herself.” They are ready to lend a listening ear whenever the need arises. They are quick to listen and slow to speak. They do not *preach* much, if at all. They hope that questions will be asked that open the door for spiritual truth to be revealed. They depend a great deal on the Holy Spirit to provide a way and do NOT attempt to “knock down closed doors” with unwanted evangelism or proselytizing.

In addition to ministry to emergency services personnel in their department and those in sister agencies, chaplains may be allowed to have a ministry to the citizens affected by emergencies within the community. Responding to emergency scenes can be a vital part of the ministry of the chaplain. When and how a chaplain responds should be worked out with the leadership of the department. Once protocols for chaplain response are worked out, they should be written and made part of the department's *Standard Operating Guidelines*.

Ministering to and Relating with Responders

What does it mean for a chaplain to “go low and slow?” The chaplain’s first priority is to listen and learn. In other words, “Go low and slow!” A Cessna 152, two-seater aircraft can fly at about 70 miles per hour. The pilot of the Cessna can see a lot more at that speed than a jet pilot could, zooming by at tree-top level at Mach One! A new chaplain will do well to listen, watch, start slowly, and stay *under the radar*. The goal, at first, is to simply be a warm and comfortable presence.

Some call this ministry of presence an *incarnational ministry* - living out the life of Christ among unbelievers. A chaplain will probably be working with and around people who do not regularly attend church. Some may have few, if any, spiritual qualities. The first thing they need to know about a chaplain is that the chaplain cares about them and the challenges they face.

A chaplain must earn the right to speak. It might take six months or more to begin to earn the respect of those to which they have been called to minister. The responders need to know that the chaplain has taken the time to understand their world. They also need time to observe the chaplain's life to find that it backs up what the chaplain says. They need to know the chaplain has answers THAT WORK in their world!

To what type of ministry do emergency services personnel respond best?

Many emergency personnel do not value spiritual things the same way chaplains or regular church-goers do. To them, prayer might be cheap and relatively meaningless, except in the most dire situations. To them, the *Bible* might be just another book. Or they might relegate spiritual matters to church and not see that Christianity should impact their daily life.

The type of ministry to which emergency services workers usually respond best is a ministry of practical helps. Helping a police officer wash a patrol car, helping a firefighter hose out the engine bay, helping a medic wash the ambulance, etc., are tangible ways to minister to people. Of course, the chaplain must be competent/knowledgeable enough that these efforts are in fact a help and not an annoyance. Too “sappy” and you are NOT perceived very well. Keeping it all in balance is the key. One chaplain found *ministry* could be a simple thing like dropping by with a pizza or donuts after a long work day. This type of ministry also builds relationships and trust. It helps a chaplain establish the fact that they are there to serve. It allows for just *spending time together*.

One may be amazed at how much ministry can be accomplished without saying a word! Picking up the tab for coffee or paying for someone's meal are practical helps that open the door for more spiritual ministry. There is a caution here, as well, though. It is good not to overdo it. Coming across as too much of a *goody-goody* can be a detriment. Fitting in is the best policy.

Will an emergency services chaplain be harassed or picked on from time to time?

While it is impossible to speak to all situations one might encounter, yes, most likely a chaplain will be harassed and picked on some, especially at first. Many emergency services responders question the value and sincerity of *preachers* when they first meet

them. They will test chaplains to see what they are really made of. It is important for chaplains to stand their ground, show the love of God, and demonstrate a lot of patience. The chaplain's continued presence will speak for itself.

With the passing of time, the chaplain will likely be accepted. In the meantime, they should not take things too personally. Most of what may seem like harassment is probably just kidding around. It is helpful for chaplains to learn to *give as much as they get*, within the boundaries of appropriate behavior for a Christian and spiritual leaders. In this aspect of life within a department or agency, chaplains will do well to *lighten up* and not take things too seriously.

The Chaplain and the Emergency Scene

How does a chaplain gain access to an emergency scene? In the case of a local emergency, access to an emergency scene is based on a person's membership in a department or agency and/or relationships with responders. A chaplain who is an official member of the fire department or law enforcement agency will be given access to the scene, almost without question. Why? Because they are not deploying themselves, and they are under a chain of command. That same chaplain, with all of their qualifications and credentials, may not be allowed on the scene of a similar emergency outside their district, because the responders do not know them. One should be aware that for a chaplain to self-deploy to emergencies outside their service area is not generally a good practice.

As a chaplain responding to an emergency in my service area, how do I get the information I need to provide effective ministry on the emergency scene?

It is a good idea for a chaplain arriving on scene to get a short briefing from someone in leadership as to what is going on and how they can be of help. Once briefed, the chaplain may be stepping into a very confusing and volatile situation. Some of the information they were given may or may not be correct. Sorting and assimilating the information that is flying at a chaplain on an emergency scene can be like putting together a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle in a very short period of time. This is especially true of serious medical emergencies or scenes involving a death. Chaplains must proceed deliberately and be careful what they say. A good rule is: Don't assume anything.

What are some of the techniques a chaplain can use for calming down an emergency situation?

First, chaplains must be calm themselves. They should speak calmly to others. The most effective way to calm a situation is by example. Chaplains must be careful what they say and do. A good rule of thumb is not to escalate the situation. Most people who are upset want to vent their feelings and have someone to listen and care. By simply being willing to listen, chaplains can help a great deal in calming down a bad situation. This ministry alone could prevent an officer from having to fight with an unruly citizen and/or arrest them.

Next, a chaplain can comply with reasonable requests. “Will you tell that officer that I am the boy’s mother? I want to see my son!” By complying with that simple request, a chaplain may help calm the situation. Telling the officer may not change a single thing, but at least the mother feels helped and that she has an advocate.

Ministering to Citizens in Crisis

What are the ministry priorities of an emergency services chaplain while on the scene of an emergency? It is commonly accepted that a chaplain's on-scene ministry priorities should be: 1) the emergency responders of their own department, 2) other emergency responders on the scene, and 3) the citizens affected by the emergency.

Can the mere arrival of a chaplain have a negative meaning for some people?

Yes. Most definitely! On one occasion, a chaplain was on the scene where an unresponsive man lay on the ground in a front yard. The man had alcohol poisoning, and CPR was in progress. His drinking partners, two males and a female, were clearly overcome by the situation. The chaplain introduced himself as the chaplain and offered to pray, as his colleagues attempted to save the life of their friend. One male and the female immediately agreed to prayer, but the second male *went ballistic!* He screamed, picked up a large, completely full trash can and hurled it into the air. To him, the presence of the chaplain and the need for prayer meant his friend was surely going to die, and he couldn't handle it!

Can the arrival and/or mere presence of a chaplain have a positive and calming effect on some people? Yes. Many people take the presence of a spiritual person on the scene of their crisis as a positive factor. For people of faith, the presence of a chaplain may bolster their own spiritual experience and help them to gain strength through prayer and trusting God. Even those who are not *religious* can feel encouraged and calmed by the presence of a chaplain. This may be due to a level of respect they have for ministers or faith in general.

What might on-scene ministry look like? On an emergency scene, chaplains need to watch all of the responders for signs of stress, abnormal behaviors, or possible medical problems they might be experiencing. However, even if they identify a possible problem in one of these areas, they must be careful when and how they address the problem. Only in extreme cases would it be appropriate for the chaplain to intervene on an emergency scene. And even then, it must be done through the chain of command.

On-scene ministry to the public should also be carried out with wisdom and care. When and how chaplains minister to the public will differ depending on the type of agency with which they are working.

Dealing with Death

As an emergency services chaplain, will I likely have to deal with people who are considering, threatening, attempting, or have attempted suicide? Yes, almost certainly. For many people new to emergency services, it is alarming to discover how many threatened, attempted, and actual suicides there are in their community. The number of people affected by these events is equally disturbing.

Will an emergency services chaplain have occasion to minister to patients who are dying? Chaplains certainly may have occasion to minister to terminally ill patients or patients whose death is immanent. Remember to follow the principle of *informed consent* and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Though one may not have many opportunities of this nature, ministry in these situations can be helpful to the recipient and gratifying to the

minister.

Are the protocols of the chaplain different if the scene of a death or serious injury is considered a crime scene? Yes. It is likely that a chaplain will not be given access to the areas of the scene that are sensitive or may have evidence not yet processed. Once a situation is deemed a possible crime scene, a chaplain must be very careful and check with command. A chaplain does NOT want to jeopardize a criminal investigation. Caution should be used at structure fires as well as law enforcement calls.

Communication and Confidentiality Issues

What is *privileged communication*? *Privileged communication* is a legal term that means that some professionals and their clients are allowed to talk with one another without fear of being required to divulge the content of their discussion. Privileged communications are said to be *confidential*. Control of privileged communications lies with the client and not with the professional. Therefore, the professional may not divulge the content of privileged communications without the consent of the client/counselee.

Can chaplains claim privileged communication? Yes. According to our research, they can, under certain circumstances.

Is a chaplain a mandated reporter? To determine one's obligation as a mandated reporter, one should consult with spiritual leaders, department commanders, and legal counsel. A chaplain's conclusions regarding this matter may be impacted by whether they are also an ordained minister and/or a board certified professional chaplain. Be aware that members of the clergy who are also first responders, EMTs, or hold other credentials may NOT be mandatory reporters as ministers, but MAY BE mandated reporters because of other credentials they hold.

Health and Safety Issues

What are some of the health risks chaplains face? If chaplains are responding to emergency calls, they are exposed to the same health risks as other responders. This is of

special importance when it comes to non-trauma, medical calls. Some health risks include contracting HIV, AIDS, hepatitis (A, B, C), tuberculosis, and a host of other communicable diseases. On the milder side, chaplains are exposed to such things as the flu and the common cold. Chaplains should make themselves aware of the dangers and methods of protection from blood, body fluids, and airborne pathogens. Some Red Cross chapters have good classes on these topics.

What is BSI, and does it apply to chaplains? BSI stands for body substance isolation.

The principle of BSI means that responders (including chaplains) establish a barrier between them and a patient's blood or body fluids. In its most basic form, BSI means wearing latex or non-latex gloves when coming into contact with a patient. This can also extend to wearing gloves when touching surfaces to which the patient may have transferred contaminants.

The following is an extreme example of the need for BSI: A chaplain went to the apartment of an elderly widowed woman. Her 45-year-old, alcoholic son had come to stay with her. In a drunken state over a period of several weeks, he had vomited and urinated all over her apartment. This contamination was all over the floors, on the sofa, on the chairs - everywhere. The stench was awful. But the woman wanted and needed ministry and prayer. What should a chaplain do? Some helpful suggestions are: maintain body substance isolation; use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately after leaving the scene; consider washing one's clothes as soon as possible; consider sanitizing one's shoes; and washing one's hands well with an anti-bacterial soap as soon as possible. In this case, had it not been winter, the chaplain might have met with the woman on the porch or lawn of the home to avoid exposure to the contaminated interior.

Additional Issues for Emergency Services Chaplains to Consider

Do the duties and responsibilities of the chaplain need to be included in a department's standard operating guidelines (SOGs)? Yes. Most definitely. There will likely be times when questions arise regarding the chaplain's responding to a particular type of call and/or questions about the ministry activities of the chaplain on a call. The chaplain program SOGs would cover chaplaincy ministry duties and guidelines for both on-

scene ministry and ministry in non-emergency times. Having these chaplaincy policies in the SOGs of the department can solve many misunderstandings or problems BEFORE they occur. If the chaplain is challenged, they can also provide him/her with a basis for defending their actions.

Since an emergency services chaplain is usually a member of a department or agency that is a governmental entity, does a chaplain need to be concerned with issues of the separation of church and state? Yes. One should have an understanding of this constitutional issue. A thorough and open-minded reading of *The Constitution of the United States* and U. S. history will reveal that the founding fathers never intended to prevent the church or its clergy from having influence in and through governmental departments or agencies. However, chaplains have to deal with the perception of some that there are laws demanding that the church and its clergy cannot have this freedom. Understanding where the leaders of a department stand on this issue would be very helpful.

Also, this issue is further complicated in that there are all types of religions and faith practices that could seek to have equal access to chaplaincy opportunities. Therefore, chaplains must walk carefully so as not to allow their own access to be blocked, and yet must also use wisdom so as not to unnecessarily open the door for even the most extreme and unlikely religious representatives to walk in.

Training for the Emergency Services Chaplain

What is CISM/CISD? CISM stands for *Critical Incident Stress Management*, and CISD stands for *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing*. Critical Incident Stress Management is the overall discipline which includes defusings, debriefings, resiliency, referral, recovery, suicide response, etc. The “gold standard” for CISM are courses provided by the *International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF)*. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings are interventions used by trained individuals to render psychological first aid to those who have or may have experienced a critical incident. They are an attempt to help people who have experienced a *critical incident* avoid PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) or other psychological, life-altering disabilities. Emergency responders see and

experience many things that are not particularly pleasant. Most of the time, these sights, sounds, smells, etc., do not have a long-term, adverse effect on them. However, some events may become a *critical incident* for them. A critical incident is an event that invokes extreme or negative reactions in the person experiencing the event. The reactions could be physiological, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, etc. Critical incidents generally have the effect of hindering people from functioning in ways that are normal for them. For emergency responders, an incident is not *critical* based on the circumstances of the event itself, but rather on the effects it has on the responder(s) involved.

What is NOVA? NOVA stands for *National Organization for Victim Assistance*. “The National Organization for Victim Assistance is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization of victim and witness assistance programs and practitioners, criminal justice agencies and professionals, mental health professionals, researchers, former victims and survivors, and others committed to the recognition and implementation of victim rights and services. Founded in 1975, NOVA is the oldest national group of its kind in the worldwide victims’ movement. NOVA’s mission is to promote rights and services for victims of crime and crisis everywhere.” FROM > <http://www.trynova.org> NOVA offers crisis training as well. Their model is a little different from the ICISF training. Some agencies prefer the NOVA model to the ICISF model. A chaplain should be aware and trained in the model used by the agency he/she serves.

What does NIMS mean? NIMS stands for *National Incident Management System*. “The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Integration Center have issued a paper on NIMS and the Incident Command System. The paper, *NIMS and the Incident Management System*, reviews the development of the various versions of the ICS and discusses the characteristics of the NIMS ICS (Incident Command System) as the *standardized incident organizational structure for the management of all [domestic] incidents*.” FROM > <http://www.fema.gov/>

Most emergency services departments require their personnel to be trained in NIMS. All emergency services chaplains should also be trained in NIMS. We suggest that our

students take NIMS 100, 200, 700, and 800. We offer “courses” in all four of these areas which are a portal to the online NIMS training provided by FEMA.

Fire Department Chaplaincy

What are the main duties of a fire chaplain? The main duties of a fire department chaplain coincide with the lives and duties of firefighters. The chaplain responds to fires, motor vehicle crashes, and medical calls. The chaplain provides ministry, both practical and spiritual, first to firefighters, then other agencies' responder personnel, and finally to citizens affected by those events. The chaplain spends time with firefighters in informal settings and is present with them during training days, at meetings, and attends special events with them such as celebrations and funerals. The chaplain's ministry is primarily one of presence.

On the scenes of house fires, the chaplain will often contact the Red Cross for the special assistance Red Cross provides for the victims of house fires, and for food and drinks for firefighters while they are working the fire. Ministry to displaced families can be quite gratifying and is usually very much appreciated.

In addition to these duties, a fire department chaplain would also have ministry in non-emergency settings that would be similar to that of law enforcement chaplains. A chaplain's services would also be made available to family members of firefighters.

Are there any uniquenesses in the fire service and its culture that affect ministry to its personnel? In the fire service, firefighters tend to keep in dynamic balance a sense of brotherhood and yet also a sense of individual, personal competitiveness. In public they often present a facade of roughness, toughness, fearlessness, and invincibility. However, one-on-one with someone they have come to like and trust, they can be warm, kind, and truly honest about themselves and their issues.

Should fire chaplains wear turnout gear at a fire? Yes. For the sake of the chaplain's safety, it is best if they are afforded the same personal protection equipment (PPE) as every other firefighter. It is also recommended by NYSAFC (New York State Association of

Fire Chaplains) that the chaplain's PPE should be clearly marked with the word *Chaplain*. As to the color of their helmet, whether it should be white (usually reserved for chiefs) or any other color, that would be up to the protocols of the local fire department or fire company based on the chaplain's rank. FROM > <http://www.nysafc.org>

Law Enforcement Chaplaincy

What are the main duties of a law enforcement chaplain? “Law enforcement chaplains do some or all of the following: 1) Counsel law enforcement officers, 2) Counsel other members of a department, 3) Counsel the families of law enforcement officers and other department personnel, 4) Visit sick or injured officers and departmental personnel in homes and hospitals, 5) Make death notifications, 6) Provide assistance to victims, 7) Teach officers in areas such as Stress Management, Ethics, Family Life, and Pre-retirement classes and courses, 8) Serve as part of a department's Crisis Response Team, 9) Assist at suicide incidents, 10) Serve as liaison with other clergy in the community, 11) Provide for the spiritual needs of prisoners, 12) Furnish expert responses to religious questions, 13) Offer prayers at special occasions such as recruit graduations, awards ceremonies, and dedication of buildings, 14) Serve on review boards, award boards, and other committees, and 15) Deal with transients and the homeless.” FROM > <http://www.icpc4cops.org/>

Are there any uniquenesses in law enforcement and its culture that affect ministry to its personnel? A term used regarding law enforcement culture is the *thin, blue line*. It is an expression that emphasizes that law enforcement personnel must support each other no matter what. The idea is this: An officer might get into a very dangerous situation and call for backup. When that fellow officer arrives, it is comforting to know that there are no relational problems with that officer. Police officers NEED TO KNOW that their fellow officer *has their back* 100% of the time. Their life might depend on it.

Sometimes in law enforcement, there seems to be an *us against them* mentality. Officers have to deal with many people that are not high on the economic or social ladder of our society. The way some put it is, “We have to deal with a lot of *scum-bags*.” Many officers tend to develop a hard, pit bull-like mentality. This is often an attempt to scare otherwise

unruly people into not *messing* with them. This harsh exterior tends to carry over into their other relationships if they are not careful. This is especially true of officers in uniform. When they are in civilian clothes, they tend to let down that tough exterior a little.

Ministry to law enforcement personnel can be challenging if a chaplain is not aware of, and/or is intimidated by the law officers' outward persona. It sometimes takes time to develop an understanding of the challenges law enforcement personnel face and how best to minister to them. As with other areas of emergency services, dealing with a responder one-on-one will often help penetrate this facade. This may open the door and allow them to reveal themselves as they really are and be willing to receive ministry from the chaplain.

Emergency Medical Services Chaplaincy

What is the history of chaplains in emergency medical services? There are fewer chaplains serving in the field as EMS chaplains than in fire and police departments. However, there is a rich history of chaplains serving in hospitals. Most of these chaplains have received extensive training in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). These chaplains tend to work in the hospital's facilities and are seldom, if ever, seen in the field. EMS personnel can call on these chaplains, but hospital chaplains would not necessarily be familiar with the lives and stresses of EMS field personnel. When emergency personnel need a chaplain's services, they are often ministered to by emergency services field chaplains who serve other agencies.

Are there any uniquenesses in emergency medical services and its culture that affect ministry to its personnel? The culture of EMS has many of the same uniquenesses that exist in the fire service and law enforcement. Beyond that, EMS personnel have to deal frequently with the human anatomy. This tends to make them seem insensitive to what are commonly regarded as private parts of the body. Also, the world of EMS is more affected by HIPAA than the rest of emergency services. They are particularly concerned about confidentiality. They also tend to work with a partner and can be very protective of that partnership.

Chaplaincy to Emergency Communicators

What are the main duties of a chaplain serving dispatchers and their culture?

Ministry to dispatchers may consist of a great deal of relationship building. A chaplain might consider regular visits to the call center and building friendships with dispatchers. They may visit the call center many, many times without speaking a word of scripture, prayer, or spiritual advice/input. They may hear *choice words* uttered from time to time. A time may come when there is a particularly gruesome situation or the dispatcher gets an emergency call from a close friend or family member. The chaplain may be invited to step in to help a dispatcher struggling with such experiences and have a deep, meaningful impact at a crucial time.

We need to interject a word of caution here. Many dispatch centers consider the audio of emergency calls and the information a dispatcher may need to access related to those call to be confidential. This may be due to internal protocols or the information may be confidential by law. Chaplains may or may not be allowed to listen, watch, and enter into conversations with call center personnel while they are on duty. If this is the case, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for a chaplain to have an effective ministry to the dispatch center's personnel. One way around this problem may be for the chaplain to become an official member of the call center staff.

What are the priorities for chaplains visiting dispatch centers? Accessibility to dispatchers when they are on duty will vary from place to place. The chaplain should be sensitive to rules and regulations of the particular call center in their area. Chaplains visiting with dispatchers need to keep in mind certain priorities. The dispatchers' main job is answering radio and phone calls. Dispatchers are trained and have shown skill in being able to do their jobs while multi-tasking. However, unnecessary distractions need to be kept to a minimum. A chaplain for dispatchers will need to get comfortable with conversations being interrupted quite often.

When there is radio traffic or phone calls, a chaplain must stop speaking and wait until the call has been answered. After the call, the conversation can be resumed. The dispatchers will often still remember what was being discussed. When the special tone goes off

indicating a 9-1-1 call, chaplains should *make themselves invisible*. They must not distract the dispatchers in any way. With experience, a chaplain should be able to tell if it is a routine call or one charged with emotion and uncertainty. Often, a chaplain will know from the *ring* if it is a 9-1-1 call, but the chaplain may not be able to hear the caller's voice. It is also important to remember, an emergency communications center is a confidential place. A chaplain MUST NOT repeat anything heard or seen there.

Success in Emergency Services Chaplaincy

What are some outward indications that an emergency services chaplain is, or has been, successful? It should be stated that God's calling and enabling are what make success possible in ministry, not our own personalities or abilities. Even those who seem the most unlikely can be used of God in powerful ways. There are certain goals and indicators, however, that, when achieved, will point to success. An early sign that a chaplain is beginning to be accepted could be when the men and women within their department or agency begin to behave the same when the chaplain is present as they do when he/she is absent. This means the responders are comfortable and able to be themselves when the chaplain is there. Next, the chaplain will begin to see individual personal relationships form with members of the department. The chief and other lead officers will include them in significant issues, especially personnel matters that face either individuals or the department as a whole. These leaders will publicly present themselves as a friend to the chaplain and as ones who value the chaplain's presence and input on a variety of issues. They will not tolerate members of the department treating the chaplain with any less respect than they would the officers. They may place the role of chaplain in the chain of command as an officer so as to send a message of honor and respect for that position.

Other measures of success are discussed more fully in our course entitled *Introduction to Emergency Services Chaplaincy*. Ultimately, the greatest success will be when souls are saved, lives are transformed, and others join the chaplain in influencing the department and community for Christ.

Are there other measures of a chaplain's success? Yes. Chaplaincy is a spiritual calling. Chaplains need to know in their heart that God has led them to serve in a particular department. There are times when the outward indicators listed in the previous question might seem elusive. Yet a chaplain may still have a real spiritual sense that they are to continue *planting seeds* for a future spiritual harvest. Sometimes success can be measured by faithfulness, integrity, and courage to persevere in spite of difficult circumstances, criticism, apathy, or disrespect.

SUMMARY – for Introduction to Emergency Services Chaplaincy

Becoming a successful emergency services chaplain is an awesome opportunity and yet an incredible challenge. Whether working with fire, police, EMS, or dispatch, effectively functioning in the role of chaplain brings with it the possibility of positively affecting the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of lost souls. Building trust and rapport with emergency responders over an extended period of time opens the door for ministry to responders and citizens alike. And continued training will help a chaplain mature and will put additional tools in their ministry toolbox. Should you choose this ministry direction, may God give you great success.

GETTING STARTED IN EMERGENCY SERVICES CHAPLAINCY

In our full-length course entitled *Getting Started in Emergency Services Chaplaincy* we present practical steps and information needed to begin serving as an emergency services chaplain. It is a three-hour course that gives detailed help for those who are considering how to get started in this area of ministry. Here is a sampling of that course.

Understanding Emergency Services Chaplain Ministry

What are some examples that illustrate how an emergency services chaplain might function in ministry to responders?

- A rookie went on his first call as a volunteer firefighter. It was a house fire in which five children under 18 years of age burned to death. Part of his job was to haul the dead children out of the house. After such a traumatic event, he could have used the help of a chaplain, but his department did not have a one. Years later, this same firefighter came to the department's new chaplain. As a result of a fatal motor vehicle accident he worked, the firefighter had not been able to eat or sleep in two days. The chaplain spent time in prayer with the firefighter and provided a two-hour session of individual CISD (Critical Incident Stress Debriefing); and the next day the firefighter reported he had slept like a baby and had begun eating normally again.
- Disciplinary action had been taken against a firefighter several times. After yet another breach of conduct, he was dismissed from the department. He needed to vent at someone, and the chaplain offered a listening ear. After his venting, he was willing to listen as never before to the salvation message presented to him by the chaplain.
- A junior firefighter was sitting at lunch with a group of veteran firefighters. The conversation got a little rough, and a veteran told the junior "to get sex anywhere he could, as often as he could, regardless of how ugly the female might be." The chaplain was present during this conversation. Later, he discussed this inappropriate behavior with the Fire Chief and the Junior Firefighter. Privately, he offered guidance and prayer to the junior firefighter.
- A fellow firefighter assisted the chaplain in a very difficult death notification. As they walked away from the death notification, the firefighter accompanying the chaplain had tears running down his face. The chaplain was able to comfort him and express appreciation for his help in a very difficult assignment.
- A volunteer firefighter had lost his regular job and been out of work for over a month. His wife had also been laid off, and the family was days away from being totally out of food. They had several young children. The chaplain was able to secure hundreds of dollars worth of food donations that would last the family for weeks. The chaplain prayed with the family. When the firefighter was hired for another job,

the family attributed the provision to a loving heavenly Father.

- A volunteer firefighter was upset with his commanding officer regarding a decision that was made. The chaplain was able to smooth over the incident, and the firefighter went on to be a highly contributing member of the department.

What are some examples that illustrate the ministry of emergency services chaplains to citizens in crisis?

- A woman was about to deliver a premature baby. The woman had life-threatening, medical complications. She was rushed by ambulance to the hospital. The chaplain rode in the back of the ambulance with her to the hospital and prayed with and for the mother and baby most of the way. The baby was born healthy, and the mother and entire family gave thanks to God for their *miracle baby*.
- A driver in her early twenties hit a large oak tree broad-side with her vehicle at highway speed. She was pinned in the vehicle for almost an hour. As the firefighters struggled to extricate her, the chaplain calmed and comforted the patient until she was able to be transported to the hospital.
- A man got into an argument with his wife. Arguments were common for this couple. He became so angry that he attempted suicide. It is unclear if this action was to punish his wife, or to end the grief of living with her. The man was a Christian/church-goer who knew God, but had briefly turned from Him. The chaplain stepped into the back of the ambulance before the crew left for the hospital. While the paramedic inserted an intravenous line, the chaplain offered prayer. Knowing the man's background, the chaplain persevered in asking the angry patient to say with him, "I will not be defeated in Jesus' Name." Finally, his anger broke and tears began to flow. As the chaplain stepped out of the ambulance, the patient was saying over and over again, "I will NOT be defeated, in Jesus' Name!" A patient who had wanted to die now wanted to live!

- An elderly gentleman died of a heart attack. Responders performed CPR for over 20 minutes. Their protocols directed them to stop CPR, but the patient's son threatened to kill them if they stopped. The chaplain was told to expedite his arrival (run with emergency lights and siren) to the scene. Calling upon his training and experience, the chaplain was able to offer prayer and a kind, calm demeanor that helped to defuse the situation.

Pursuing Ministry as an Emergency Services Chaplain

What are some steps a person could take in deciding whether or not to pursue ministry as an emergency services chaplain?

- Take an extended time to pray, asking the Lord for His direction.
- If you are married, be sure you and your spouse are in agreement in taking this step.
- Realistically assess the commitment of time and spiritual and emotional energy you are able to give to this calling.
- Honestly evaluate your motivation.

What does an emergency services chaplain get paid, and where can one find a position? Emergency services chaplains are almost exclusively volunteers who serve alongside other members of an emergency response agency. It would be very unlikely for a person to find a paid position as an emergency services chaplain. However, if a person is looking for an opportunity to serve, the field is wide open. Our statistics indicate that less than ten percent of emergency services departments and agencies have active chaplains working with them. And yet, we have reason to believe that a vast majority of these same groups would welcome a wise, well-trained, caring person of God (male or female) to serve alongside them.

Who initiates the beginning of an emergency services chaplaincy program?

The *getting started* process for emergency services chaplaincy can begin at the initiative of

the hosting agency, or it can begin in the heart of an individual who is called by God to be a chaplain.

When a person has determined that the Lord is directing them to become an emergency services chaplain, what steps will he/she need to take to find a chaplain position?

- Learn all you can about emergency services and emergency services chaplaincy.
- Begin seeking God about which area of emergency services will be your primary focus.
- Get acquainted with your local emergency services departments.
- Zero in on a particular area of emergency services.
- Apply to the department and get approved as a chaplain.

Beginning a Chaplaincy Ministry

What if my local department has never had a chaplaincy program and they do not know how to begin one? No doubt, there are many departments who do not really know what chaplains do or what they should do. The department will probably want to develop Standard Operating Guidelines for their chaplaincy program. Some will want to do this before accepting a chaplain. Others might wait until the chaplain is active before addressing these issues. We have material available upon request that can help in the development of department Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) for chaplaincy ministry. We also recommend, as stated earlier, the Federation of Fire Chaplains website for a good overview on how a department can start a chaplaincy program and the duties of a chaplain. Their information is especially useful in helping a fire department develop its chaplaincy program. Other types of departments can also adapt the chaplaincy information to their agency's needs.

What additional training might a new emergency services chaplain need?

Continued training is important to being a good chaplain. Many times the department or agency in which you serve will pay for your training. Consider taking several courses in Critical Incident Stress Management/Debriefing (CISM/CISD.) These courses are sponsored by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF). We suggest you

first take our course entitled *Overview of Critical Incident Stress Management*. It has been approved by ICISF. This will give you a good understanding of the terms and concepts taught in a variety of CISM in-classroom courses. These ICISF courses usually last for two days and cost between \$120 to \$300 each. They are taught in locations all across the country. The course titles include: *CISD: Helping Individuals in Crisis*; *CISD: Group Crisis Intervention*; *Pastoral Crisis Intervention*; *Suicide*; and many more.

SUMMARY - Getting Started in Emergency Services Chaplaincy

Lives have been touched because emergency services chaplains not only know God intellectually, but they also know His power and love experientially. They minister to each person without bias. They depend on the power of the Holy Spirit of God. They do not push religion, nor do they push any particular theological position. They primarily provide a ministry of presence, showing God's love to those in need. They build relationships. When they are invited to do so, they call on Almighty God to do miracles in the lives of hurting and confused people.

DEATH NOTIFICATION AND RELATED ISSUES

In our full-length course entitled *Death Notification and Related Issues* we present detailed procedures for making proper death notifications and special insights about dealing with people who have experienced the loss of a loved one. It is a five-hour course and contains much valuable information about issues surrounding death and loss. Here is a sampling of that course.

What is a death notification? A death notification occurs when a person or persons with relational ties to the deceased need to be told of the death of their loved one/family member/friend. When a person is called upon to inform another person of a death, performing that duty constitutes a death notification.

Why is it important how a death notification is given? A death notification properly given can help a bad situation be a little more bearable. On the other hand, an insensitive,

ill-prepared notification can add to the pain of the bereaved. We must keep in mind that there is more involved to giving a death notification than simply following an outline or a set of step-by-step instructions. Adequate preparation and training must be blended together with kindness and empathy. As ambassadors of Christ in the situation, we attempt to ease the burden of loss, not add to it.

How do I prepare myself to give a death notification?

- Get good, accurate information
- Ready yourself mentally, spiritually and emotionally.
- Think through or even write down the wording you will use in your preparatory statement.
- Have someone accompany you when giving a death notification.

When making a death notification, what do I do when I first arrive and what are the steps I should follow in making the actual notification? There are a variety of things you need to do when you first arrive at a location to give a death notification. The last thing you would want to do is to make the situation worse by being unprepared or inadequately trained. In our death notification course we give our students the training they need to avoid some of the likely pit-falls. In the full version of the death notification course, we give the 24 steps we have identified as necessary in giving a proper death notification. We strongly recommend you take that course.

How do I make the actual notification? The actual death notification usually begins with a brief preparatory statement followed by some very specific words that clearly communicate that the person is dead. Care should be taken NOT to give a very well-structured and properly delivered death notification to the WRONG family. This has happened, and it is tragic. The correct notification is delayed and the false notification is needlessly devastating to the recipient(s). If this happens, the public relations backlash can be severely damaging to your department.

.What are some special circumstances that might affect the death notification process? There are a variety of special situation in which a person may die and a chaplain must make a death notification. Some of these include a death at a crime scene

with family present, a death following a medical call where significant life-saving effort are performed while family watches, a face-to-face death notification when family arrives on scene after death has occurred, secondary death notifications after the next-of-kin have been notified, death notifications to children, and (hopefully not very often) death notifications by phone. Difficult or strange situations can develop on a death scene. These situations can be highly unpredictable and require the chaplain to be nimble in thought and deed. Each of these can require the chaplain to modify the death notification process as the situation dictates.

Sometimes a chaplain might find people in crisis to be rude or obnoxious. Helping those suffering loss with impartiality is often challenging. We must keep in mind that it is not the chaplain's place to determine who *deserves* help. We give help because it is needed, not because it is deserved. In doing so, we exemplify God's grace and can be used as instruments of His mercy.

DEATH-RELATED ISSUES

Who should make the death notification to children? In this context, we consider children to be persons under the age of 18 years old. Most of the time, notifying a child is a secondary notification. That is, the child's parent(s) and/or older sibling(s) have already been notified. Most law enforcement personnel do not do secondary notifications. So, these notifications are generally left to other family members or to the chaplain.

On a scene where there is a death, should the chaplain make it a point to view the body? It is important for the chaplain not to be perceived as getting a thrill out of seeing a lot of *blood and guts*. It is a good practice for a chaplain to focus his/her attention on those affected by what is happening on the scene of a death. The chaplain would need to use discretion as to when viewing the body is necessary. However, a chaplain would not want to be timid or avoid the situation if their assistance is called for. Until a person is able to get more accustomed to death scenes, however, they might make it a practice not to look at the deceased in the face (or whatever makes the situation easier for them.) As a chaplain develops more experience in this area, it becomes less difficult to manage. Some talk of a *veil of protection* that develops as a person gets used to thinking in terms of doing what

they need to do on the scene and doesn't focus as much on their own reactions to death and dying. It is also good to avoid stepping over the body if possible. This is simply a demonstration of respect.

What effects will death itself have on the body of the deceased (outside of any other trauma or condition)? The body of the deceased will probably be cool to the touch and may have a bluish color. Depending on how long it has been since the person died, they might also be stiff. The presence of these and other conditions help investigators to determine how long the deceased has been dead. Terms used for these conditions that you might expect to hear are *rigor* and *lividity*.

In the event of a death, what is the role of the coroner or medical examiner? The role of the coroner is to investigate certain types of deaths. These include homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, criminal abortions, unforeseen sudden deaths, deaths of those in law enforcement custody, penal deaths such as executions, deaths of children under age 18, suspicious deaths, and deaths in unlicensed health care facilities such as nursing homes. The coroner is the senior law enforcement official on the scene of a death.

What does it mean for a body to be embalmed? Embalming, in most modern cultures, is the art and science of temporarily preserving human remains to forestall decomposition and to make them suitable for display at a funeral. The three goals of embalming are thus preservation, sanitization, and presentation (or restoration) of a dead body to achieve this effect.

“Embalming is the procedure using chemicals, such as formaldehyde, to temporarily preserve human remains. Embalming is not required by any state or federal law.” FROM > <http://www.funeralplanning101.com/funeral-glossary.aspx>

What are the five predictable stages of loss in the grieving process? Through her research and interviews with terminally ill hospital patients, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross found that people go through five distinct stages of loss. These stages are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. “Those experiencing these stages can be expanded to include any person(s) who are experiencing any significant loss. ... Although

there is a tendency to progress from one stage to the next in order, both dying patients and their loved ones experience the stages in their own unique ways. They may jump around among the stages, they may go back and forth, or they may never finish them. It is important for you to remain flexible, so you can decide how best to help, if asked.” FROM > Paramedic Care, Vol. 1, page 31.

Who is affected by a death? Remember that family members are not the only ones affected by a person's death. Responders might be affected by the death of their patient. Officers might be affected by the death of a suspect or victim of a motor vehicle crash. If the death occurs in a nursing home, those who were responsible for the patient's on-going care might be affected by their death. If the death occurs on the scene of a MVC, the other driver and passengers might be affected. Bystanders and witnesses might be affected. If the chaplain seeks to minister to all those affected by a death, the death scene can be a busy place. While it is beyond the scope of a study on death notifications, one should be alert to the fact that ministry opportunities might arise among the broader group of people affected by a death. A chaplain's assistance could very well be needed and appreciated beyond the circle of family, close friends, and responders.

SUMMARY – Death Notification & Related Issues

When a loved one dies, the death itself can invoke a wide range of emotions. And these emotions can cause people to react in a host of unexpected ways. Be ready for anything and everything. In notifying the next-of-kin, the goal is to do it in a manner that makes a bad situation a little more bearable, and in a way that does not add to their pain. Within reason, cooperate with whatever makes the situation better for the deceased loved ones. Through proper training, a death notification can become an opportunity for ministry. Done well, the family's residual memories of you, that will likely last forever, will be the grace, kindness, and compassion you showed.

AN OVERVIEW OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

In our full-length course entitled *An Overview of Critical Incident Stress Management* we

present a synopsis of how Critical Incident Stress Management functions and its importance in emergency settings. It is a five-hour course and is intended to help the student understand the importance of the skills taught in CISM. Here is a sampling of that course.

Acknowledgment: We are very grateful to the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation for their input and support in the development of our full-length *Overview of CISM* course. Special thanks to Becky Stoll, Chairman of the Board of ICISF; Don Howell, Executive Director of ICISF; Dr. Victor Welzant, ICISF Director of Training and Education; and Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell, President Emeritus of ICISF.

What are the scope and purpose of the course? This course is intended to give the student a general overview of Critical Incident Stress Management. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a specialized discipline of great benefit to emergency services chaplains. This course is NOT intended to replace any of the in-depth courses offered by several fine organizations, but rather to whet the student's appetite for pursuing more study in this very important area of emergency services chaplain training.

Another objective of this course is to stress how vital it is for emergency services chaplains to have an adequate understanding of stress and its effects on emergency responders. Through this course, the student should gain the understanding that Critical Incident Stress Management is not a one-time, one-event fix, but rather a continuum of care for those affected by critical incident stress.

What is the origin of the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation? The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation was founded by Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell and Dr. George Everly. While Mitchell was working on a master's degree in psychology in Maryland, he was *moon-lighting* as a paramedic to supplement his income. Working as a paramedic at a motor vehicle crash scene, he encountered a young bride. She was severely injured in the crash. Apparently the couple had just left their wedding. Wearing her white wedding gown, the bride was drenched with her own blood and impaled by a large metal pipe as a result of the crash. She died from her injuries. Subsequently, Mitchell

found it very difficult to escape those images and lost his psychological homeostasis. (*Homeostasis* is generally considered a state of equilibrium. See further definitions for *homeostasis* below). The process Mitchell went through to recover from the stress and its associated effects has led to the modern CISM/CISD movement that has now encompassed the globe.

Experiencing a Crisis or a Loss

What is a *crisis*? A *crisis* is a time of great danger or trouble (Webster). A crisis is specific, unexpected, and non-routine. It will likely require a change of some type in order to be resolved. Further definitions include:

- A crucial or decisive point or situation; a turning point.
- An unstable situation, in political, social, economic or military affairs, especially one involving an impending abrupt change.
- (medicine) A sudden change in the course of a disease, usually at which the patient is expected to recover or die.
- (psychology) A traumatic or stressful change in a person's life.
- (drama) A point in a drama at which a conflict reaches a peak before being resolved.

FROM > <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/crisis>

How do we know an event is a crisis in someone's life? A crisis occurs when a stressful life event overwhelms an individual's ability to cope effectively in the face of a perceived challenge or threat (G. Everly & J. Mitchell, 1999). More specifically, a crisis may be thought of as a response condition wherein:

- 1) psychological homeostasis has been disrupted;
- 2) one's usual coping mechanisms have failed to reestablish homeostasis; and,
- 3) the distress engendered by the crisis has yielded some evidence of functional impairment.

What are the common elements of a crisis? 1) A hazardous event, 2) A vulnerable state, 3) A precipitating factor, 4) A state of active crisis.

What are some acknowledged phases of a crisis and how long do they normally last?

- Impact Phase - from hours to days,
- Withdrawal / Confusion Phase - from days to weeks,
- Adjustment Phase - from weeks to months,
- Reconstruction /Reconciliation Phase - months or longer

It should be stated here that each person and each situation is different. A person will move through these phases in their own unique way and in their own time.

Understanding Stress

What are two types of stress? The types of stress include *eustress* and *distress*.

Eustress is a rather benign form of stress that could be considered motivational in nature rather than a negative, harmful life experience. In contrast, *distress* is a more malignant form of stress that has more potential for harm. In its more severe forms, distress can short-circuit a person's ability to cope with life. [One can also view stress as coming in different levels of intensity instead of as different "types".]

What is burst stress? *Burst stress* is a special form of stress. It can be good stress or bad stress, depending on how frequently it is experienced. "Emergency personnel have a different kind of stress in their jobs, called *burst stress*. Burst stress means there is not always a steady stressor, but at times, there is an immediate *burst* from low stress to a high stress state. In other words, they go from complete calm to high activity and pressure in one *burst*. The normal stress situation for most of the rest of the work force consists of a stress building process that can be either reduced or adapted to before it gets *out of control*. This is not the case for the (police) officer, because *out of control* can happen in seconds. The law enforcement job is reactive, not proactive. Officers cannot usually control entrance into most situations they face, unlike most people who get warnings. They

have to react, not prevent problems. It is difficult to defend against burst stress."

FROM > <http://www.heavybadge.com/10reason.htm> (item #6)

Burst stress is also present in the lives of other emergency services personnel besides police officers. Examples would include a dispatcher answering a 9-1-1 call from a frantic citizen, emergency medical services (EMS) personnel being dispatched to a serious medical emergency, and firefighters being toned out to a large structure fire in which one or more occupants have not yet made it out of the home safely.

What are some common ways of dealing with stress that are actually counterproductive? Many ways of dealing with stress - drugs, pain medicines, alcohol, smoking, eating, outbursts of anger, self-harm, violence toward others, withdrawal from friends/loved ones, anger with God, etc. are actually counterproductive in that they can worsen the stress and can make one more reactive (sensitive) to further stress.

Stress from Critical Incidents

What is a *critical incident*? *Critical incidents* are unusually challenging events that have the potential to create significant human distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms. If this potential is realized, it can, for either short or long periods of time, disrupt psychological homeostasis.

What makes something a critical event for a person? It is NOT *the event itself* that defines whether or not it is critical, but *how a person reacts to it* or their inability to cope with it. For emergency responders, most stress is NOT caused by one single event. It is the piling up of circumstances or events that may overwhelm their ability to adequately cope with their circumstances. A single, seemingly insignificant event may become a critical event for someone in light of the fact that it comes on the heels of, or in addition to, all the other stresses they face.

What psychological disorder is one of the more severe examples of stress that has not been well managed? One of the more severe effects of stress is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. People who do not effectively manage the stresses of life, especially sudden, acute stress, are at higher risk for losing their ability to cope. It is hoped that CISM and its many elements and applications will lessen the depth and length of the effects of stress.

Dealing with Critical Incident Stress

What are the elements of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)? CISM deals with prevention, intervention, and post-vention of stress and its effects on people. CISM is a comprehensive, integrated, systematic, and multi-component approach to crisis intervention. It includes a variety of different elements including Prevention, Strategic Planning, Assisting Individuals, Group Interventions (including demobilization and crisis briefings), Small Group Interventions (including defusings and debriefings), Family Interventions, and Pastoral Crisis Intervention.

What are the various components of the Critical Incident Stress Management continuum? The CISM continuum components include pre-crisis preparation, interventions for disasters and large-scale incidents, defusings, debriefings, one-on-one assistance for individuals, family crisis intervention, follow-up and referral. [This topic is dealt with more fully in reading assignment # 4, at the end of this course.]

What is Pastoral Crisis Intervention? It is the combining of the principles and practices of psychological crisis intervention with the practices of pastoral encouragement, care, and support. It focuses on the new and now, where pastoral counseling focuses on the past, present, and the future.

What is the difference between Pastoral Crisis Intervention and Pastoral Counseling? This topic can be best explained by comparing it to forms or levels of medical assessment and interventions for an injured person. When a person incurs a

medical injury, they may need medical *first aid*. First responders are trained to assess the patient's airway, breathing, and circulation - the ABC's. If their airway is blocked, open it. If they are not breathing, help them breathe through artificial ventilation. If their heart is not adequately circulating blood, start CPR. If they go into cardiac arrest, use an AED. Once these issues are under control, then take care of immediate life threats like excessive bleeding, etc. Once the patient is stabilized, he/she should be transported to a higher level of care (a hospital), if necessary. If transported, the emergency room staff will provide a level of care above that of the first responders. If surgery or long-term care is required, the patient goes on to an even higher (different) level of care.

As in our medical first responder illustration, Pastoral Crisis Intervention is *first aid* for a person who MAY be experiencing a crisis that is affecting their faith. In the world of psychology, crisis intervention is to psychotherapy what pastoral crisis intervention is to pastoral counseling. If your responsibility is to provide pastoral crisis intervention, taking the time to do *spiritual surgery* (pastoral counseling) would probably be inappropriate. In the immediate, there is a time for spiritual first aid. Pastoral counseling is a later, more involved, time-consuming intervention which is outside the scope of CISM.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings

What is a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing? A *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing* (CISD) is one of many interventions within the CISM system. It can be as simple as a trained, lead debriefer accompanied by a CISD-trained peer talking with a small group of responders. Larger groups might require the addition of a CISD-trained, mental health professional and a chaplain/clergy. Or it can be as complicated as several teams of debriefers sitting with several different homogeneous groups simultaneously, with each group meeting in a separate room or area.

It is common for a group debriefing to last from an hour and a half to three hours. The debriefing would follow the seven-phase debriefing model. The length of time has a lot to do with the nature of the event, the number of people participating in the debriefing, the depth of their loss of homeostasis, the group members' willingness to participate, etc.

Group debriefings should not be confused with one-on-one crisis intervention sessions where the SAFER model is employed by a CISM-trained facilitator. [The SAFER model is described in our full-length course.]

What are the goals of CISD? The goals of CISD are stabilization, symptom reduction, return to adaptive functioning, or facilitating continued care. One of the keys to CISD and other forms of psychological first-aid is to do NO HARM nor to cause further injury to the patient.

What is *cathartic ventilation*? The term *cathartic ventilation* that is used in Critical Incident Stress Management has to do with the theory that under certain circumstances, when people talk about a critical incident event or situation, especially with emotion, they feel better and are more functional afterwards. They are helped, and their coping abilities may be restored without further assistance.

SUMMARY - An Overview of CISM

Critical Incident Stress Management and its related strategies and interventions can be helpful to both emergency services personnel and citizens in crisis. As *spiritual first responders*, trained chaplains functioning as official members of an emergency services department have a unique opportunity to help both responders and citizens in time of need. **Warning!** The materials contained within this course are a summary of our overview course. Students reading the above material should NOT present themselves as trained in CISM/CISD. You need more training before you are ready to provide CISM interventions.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

In our full-length course *Psychological First Aid: Providing PFA as an Emergency Services Chaplain* we present the basic principles of a proven method for assisting people in crisis. It is a five-hour course and contains a good overview of this valuable skill set. Here is a sampling of that course.

Scope & Purpose of our PFA Course

Having presented an overview of critical incident stress management in a separate course, in this course we seek to present an overview of psychological first aid, its value and application in emergency services chaplaincy. Although application of psychological first aid skills and techniques may be directed toward emergency responders, they will more likely be used when assisting citizens in crisis. We believe that CISM (the Mitchell model) and Psychological First Aid in its various forms will be valuable tools for anyone in chaplaincy ministry, especially emergency services chaplains.

How is Psychological First Aid beneficial in emergency services settings? In the world of emergency services, a chaplain will likely have many opportunities to encounter and minister to a variety of people. These will likely include *average citizens* who may have experienced (or are in the middle of experiencing) a crisis or a traumatic event in their lives. Chaplains also have the opportunity to minister to emergency responders within their own department or sister agencies who may need assistance in dealing with a particularly stressful problem or situation. For these and others, the chaplain may want to administer Psychological First Aid. [Ministry to responders who are dealing with critical incident stress will likely follow the Mitchell Model (from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.)]

What is a summary of the core actions of Psychological First Aid (PFA)?

- Contact & Engage
- Safety & Comfort
- Stabilization
- Information Gathering: Needs and Current Concerns
- Practical Assistance
- Connection with Social Supports
- Information on Coping
- Linkage with Collaborative Services

What are some things not to say and things to say when dealing with people in crisis?

Do NOT say things like:

- “I understand.”
- “It sounds like . . .”
- “I’m glad you can share those feelings.”
- “You’re lucky that. . .”
- “It’ll take some time but you’ll get over it.”
- “I can imagine how you feel.”
- “Don’t worry, it’s going to be all right.”
- “Try to be strong for your children.”
- “Calm down and try to relax.”

Do say things like:

- “You are safe now (if true).”
- “I’m glad you’re here with me now.”
- “I’m glad you’re talking with me now.”
- “I am sorry it happened.”
- “It wasn’t your fault (if there was no attributable blame to the victim).”
- “Your reaction is not an uncommon response to such a terrible thing.”
- “I can’t imagine how terrible you are feeling.”
- “You are not going crazy.”
- “Things may never be the same, but they can get better.”

What are some other considerations in applying PFA? If a victim needs PFA, by all means help them. If in the assessment process, you find that they are coping just fine, have the decency and courage to realize that this time your services were just not needed. As you continue to function as the loving hands of the Lord extended, be sure to exercise good self care. Be sure that in the process of “saving others,” that you do not become a victim yourself. And if you do, accept the same help from colleagues that you are offering to so many others.

Summary – Psychological First Aid

Again, we would like to state that this course is only intended as an **overview** of Psychological First Aid and how it is applied by emergency services chaplains. The course is intended to be a companion course to the Psychological First Aid course provided on the Internet. We strongly discourage any assertion that by studying our material, a person is now qualified in the area of PFA.

MINISTRY TO A SUICIDAL SUBJECT

In our full-length course entitled *Ministry to a Suicidal Subject* we discuss vital information about suicide, its causes, effects, and how to effectively minister in the context of suicide.

Disclaimer: Death and suicide can be very difficult subjects for some people to deal with. The following are some warning signs that may indicate that you SHOULD NOT take this course or read the following material: Have you attempted suicide in the past? Do you struggle with thoughts of suicide? Have you been close to someone who has committed suicide? Do you struggle with depression or other forms of mental illness? Do you have a drug or alcohol problem? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may NOT want to take this course. This course is only for mature adults who are able to effectively deal with death and graphic descriptions of death by suicide and its effects. NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN, TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS! If you have any doubt whether or not you should take this course, please consult your physician or mental health professional before reading the materials contain herein.

Introduction

In the world of emergency services, there is much more exposure to people with suicidal thoughts and actions than most people realize. Whether you are ministering in a large metropolitan area, in small-town rural America, or somewhere in between, you will likely be called on to minister in the context of suicide. People who contemplate suicide and those who act on such thoughts may include emergency services personnel in your own

department, emergency services personnel in sister agencies, and citizens you respond to when they are in the midst of a crisis.

It should be stated that anyone can have suicidal thoughts and, under the right set of circumstances, might carry those thoughts into suicidal actions. From the strongest to the weakest among us, we may at some point be in need of suicide-related ministry. Chaplains themselves can fall prey to thoughts of suicide, either from emotional or psychological maladies within or from a spiritual attack from outside sources. In *Proverbs* 16:18, the *Bible* says, "Pride comes before a fall." And *I Corinthians* 10:12 contains the warning, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall."

When you are in the throes of ministry with suicidal subjects, you may be holding life and death in your hands. Pray earnestly and choose your words carefully – not out of fear, but depending heavily on the Holy Spirit of God to guide you. Remember to embrace the phrase from the Hippocratic Oath medical doctors take: "Do no harm."

As we begin this study, we will present ministry to suicidal subjects in three categories: prevention, intervention, and post-vention.

What is suicide prevention? Suicide prevention is ministry planning and actions undertaken before a suicidal issue surfaces. If we can develop emotional, cognitive, and behavioral resiliency in responders and citizens, we will have gone a long way in helping to prevent suicides. A sense of efficacy on the part of responders and the community as a whole is an important part of suicide prevention. It would be foolish to assume that we can prevent all suicide-related thoughts and actions. However, suicide prevention should be a key element of your ministry. It may prevent or reduce the risk of someone committing suicide.

What is suicide intervention? One of the most dramatic areas of ministry to a suicidal subject is that of suicide intervention. Your ministry in a suicidal context may be initiated by a responder confiding in you that they are having suicidal thoughts or a preoccupation with

death or dying. Or, an even more dramatic event is when the tones go off or the call goes out for a threatened or attempted suicide. We will talk more about suicide intervention ministry further along in this course. But by way of introduction, suicide intervention is stepping into a situation where a subject may have become a real threat to himself/herself. It can quickly become a life-and-death situation. Be careful. Suicidal subjects can be so determined to take their own life that they do not mind killing or injuring anyone who tries to intervene. Continually ask yourself, "Is my scene safe?" If it is not, you should not be there!

What is suicide post-vention? The last category of ministry in the context of suicide has been termed suicide *post-vention*. No matter how much we do in suicide prevention and intervention, there are those who will end up taking their own life. And even if suicidal threats or attempts are thwarted, there is still a need for suicide post-vention ministry. The ministry that takes place after a suicide threat, attempt or completion can be termed *post-vention*. Post-vention suicide ministry is especially important for those who have attempted suicide but did not die as a result.

What is the origin and definition of the word *suicide*?

Origin – The word *suicide* literally means *self death*. It comes from two Latin roots, *sui* (of oneself) and *cidium* (killing or slaying).

FROM > http://facts.randomhistory.com/2009/07/15_suicide.html "99 Little Known Facts About Suicide" Accessed 8-16-2012

Definition – Suicide is an acute, intentional act in which a person tries to or succeeds in taking their own life. An example of a direct form of suicide is when a person puts a gun to their head, in their mouth or to their chest and fires. Some indirect forms of suicide, but suicide nonetheless, are in cases when a person intentionally steps out into traffic and is struck by a vehicle traveling at highway speed or when a person walks into the path of a train or drives a vehicle into the path of a train. By this definition, some may say that the only valid use of the term *suicide* is in referring to a *completed suicide*, where the person actually dies.

In the United States, how does suicide rank as compared to other forms of death?

According to a number of Internet sources, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the USA. (Some say it is the 11th cause of death.)

How do gender, ethnicity, and age differences affect suicide rates?

- Males are four times as likely to die by suicide than females. They represent 79% of the suicide deaths in the USA.
- Females attempt suicide two to three times as often as males but most of these attempts are not fatal.
- White Americans are more likely to die by suicide than Americans of other racial backgrounds.
- Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among Americans between the ages of 15-24 and the second leading cause of death among those between the ages of 25-34.
- Suicide rates increase with old age. The highest rate is among men over age 75.
- Elderly people who die by suicide are often divorced or widowed and suffering from a physical illness.

The above information was obtained from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center. For more statistics on suicide, go to their website <http://www.sprc.org/basics/about-suicide> (Accessed on 8-20-2012)

Suicide Prevention

What are some of the factors that help minimize suicide risk? There are a number of protective factors that decrease suicide risk. Increasing the number and strength of these protective factors is a good goal in suicide prevention. The following are a few of the preventive factors we list in the full version of our suicide course. Increasing these positive conditions including personal and social resources may help to promote resiliency and reduce the potential for suicide. Some of these protective factors are related to family, genetics, and environment. They aid the potentially suicidal subject from becoming

overwhelmed.

- Dominant attitudes, values, and norms prohibiting suicide, including strong beliefs about the meaning and value of life
- Good health, access to health care
- Best friends, supportive significant others
- Religious/spiritual beliefs
- Hope for the future
- Sobriety and good impulse control
- A reasonably safe, stable environment
- Feeling a sense of responsibility and/or duty to others
- Pet ownership

Suicide Intervention

As stated above, most people who contemplate suicide often give others around them clues or warning signs regarding their suicidal thoughts or plans. Although this is not always the case, when warning signs are detected, action should be taken. In the world of emergency services, responders, including chaplains, are often called to the scene of a suicidal subject. The response by emergency services personnel is usually the result of a call to 9-1-1. In these cases, it is standard practice for fire/rescue and ambulance personnel to *stage in the area* (wait in a safe area nearby) until law enforcement determines the scene is secure (safe). It is a good rule of thumb to NOT go into the immediate area of an actively suicidal subject unless the scene has been secured by law enforcement.

How does a person recognize indicators of suicide risk? It is always appropriate to take a person seriously who is signaling or verbalizing suicidal thoughts or intent. A less overt indicator of possible suicidal risk is when a person becomes preoccupied with death. This indicator should be investigated to determine possible increased risk for suicide. We

are not saying that a person should be looking for the specter of suicide behind every bush, but the risk of suicide is a serious issue that should be explored and when appropriate, reported.

What are some potential negative consequences of providing suicide intervention?

If you discover a person might be suicidal, most people agree that action should be taken. Suppose a person blurts out the phrase, "I was so embarrassed I could have just died!" Does this exclamatory statement express suicidal thoughts or intent? Suppose you call a suicidal hotline or 9-1-1 and report the person. The person's life could be turned up-side-down unnecessarily. Wisdom must be used as to when to report and when failure to properly report could cost a life.

What other factors besides intent should I consider in assessing suicidal risk?

1) Is there a previous history of suicidal behavior? 2) Have they thought about how they would kill themselves? 3) Do they have the means? 4) Are the means sufficiently lethal?

What is a common progression of suicidal behavior? There is a common progression in suicide. The suicidal person may progress through these phases linearly or could jump around, skipping some. The common progression is 1) suicidal ideation, 2) suicidal threats or warning signs, 3) suicide attempt(s), and finally 4) suicide completion.

What are some resources a suicidal person can call on?

The National Hopeline Network (1-800-SUICIDE) provides access to trained telephone counselors, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Source: [American Association of Suicidology \(AAS\)](#). The purpose of AAS is to understand and prevent suicide. AAS promotes research, public awareness programs, and education and training for professionals, survivors, and interested lay persons. (202) 237-2280

FROM > <http://www.healthyplace.com/depression/suicide/understanding-and-helping-the->

[suicidal-](#)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** (AFSP) is exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research and education, and to reaching out to people with mood disorders and those affected by suicide.

The National Alliance on Mental Health (1-800-950-6264 - - www.nami.org) is a wonderful resource for clinicians, persons with mental illness and their families. Their invaluable grassroots effort includes missions of public awareness, destigmatizing mental illness, family and consumer peer education and support programs as well as advocacy work on local, state, and national levels.

For **hope & encouragement**, there is a website that may help. Go to www.emergencychaplains.org/hope. This site is intended to provide practical helps and spiritual encouragement to people who are experiencing a crisis, including suicidal thoughts.

SUMMARY – Ministry to a Suicidal Subject

Dealing with suicidal subjects is one of the many challenges that an emergency services chaplain will likely face. It is important to pay attention to those to whom you are called to minister. It may be in a non-emergency setting, talking to or counseling one-on-one with a firefighter, a police officer, an EMS professional, or an emergency dispatcher. It may be in an emergency setting where you and your team have been called to the home of a suicidal subject. Regardless of the circumstance, hopefully the information provided in our full length course will assist you in being more knowledgeable about how to minister to a suicidal subject.

Ministry in the context of suicide begins by developing and implementing suicide prevention in your department and in your community. Helping those with whom you have influence to become resilient in the face of overwhelming life events can help save lives that might otherwise be lost to suicide. When suicide prevention fails, suicide interventions may become necessary. Once the scene is safe, you might be called on to help stabilize the situation as you provide hope and encouragement. And finally, post-vention suicide ministry can help a person develop some resiliency and personal efficacy they did not have prior to their acute suicidal event. When a completed suicide occurs, ministry to the survivors may become vital to prevent a subsequent suicide by one or more of the victim's family or friends.

Summary of this Course

In the world of emergency services – fire, police, EMS and emergency dispatch – service is the name of the game. And in this world, chaplains play a vital role. Responders see and experience the sights, sounds, and smells of crises in ways no human should have to. Yet someone must. They are public servants, often risking their lives to save lives and protect others and their property, providing justice and rendering life-saving care. They need to know that someone cares about them. This is not selfishness; it is self-preservation.

Responders are ordinary people doing an extraordinary job, often under very difficult circumstances. They are not toy action figures with little, if any, thoughts or feelings of their own. They are not super-heroes from Saturday morning cartoons, comic books, or the latest Hollywood movie. They are regular people with everyday problems of their own. They need emotional, spiritual, and practical helps to keep their sanity and function in the jobs they love. Talk is cheap, but someone to listen and care – now that is a rare and much-needed commodity.

The citizens our brave responders bend over backwards helping every day need our help, too. Chaplains can offer comfort, kindness, and care to the citizens of their community in their greatest hour of need. They may be trying to deal with their son's serious injuries

from a car wreck, their father's massive heart attack, or the suicide of a close friend. The emotional, spiritual, and practical helps a chaplain provides can make all the difference in the world for these neighbors of ours.

In the *Gospel of Luke*, chapter 10, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. Two people who observed the man who had been beaten and robbed were too busy to help. But the third was compelled by compassion. He was *coming alongside with passion and energy*. Without preaching or asking anything in return, this unlikely caring soul made a huge difference in someone's life; not for vain glory, but because it was in his character to do so. The Christian world needs preachers and pastors – great orators who can rightly divide the Word of Truth. But our world also need chaplains who can fill their ministry tool boxes with practical helps and do their works in the Name of the Lord - drawing men and women, boys and girls to the Lord by being His hands extended in their greatest hour of need.

Would you like to make a difference in the lives of hurting people? Would you like to be a vital member of the 9-1-1 response team in your community? Would you be willing to walk a mile in the shoes and boots of everyday heroes? Firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency medical personnel, and emergency dispatchers are longing for someone to take the time to learn what their world is all about, to show some genuine interest in them and what they do. If you want to be that person who can bridge the gap between God and hurting people, here is what you need to do. The Bible says to . . . “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you . . .” (1 Peter 3:15)

Emergency services and chaplaincy ministry related to it is NOT for the faint of heart. Knowing God has called you to this work is essential. The mother of Jesus gave his followers some timely advice. At the wedding at Cana of Galilee, she told the host, “Listen to my son. Whatever He tells you to do, do it!” This admonition is just as true today as it was then. Knowing God has called me here, to this work, is often the only thing that keeps me going. There are times of deep discouragement and times of sheer euphoria. But feelings come and go. Knowing God’s will for your life will sustain you when nothing else will.

We challenge you! If God is directing you this way, then “jump in with both feet.” Take a

leap of faith. Allow the Holy Spirit of God to remake you into His image. Become His hands extended. Learn practical helping skills. Employ those skills to serve responders and citizens in crisis. And when the applause comes, give God the glory. Serve humbly and point all who will listen to our Heavenly Father who, by the power of His might, raised Jesus from the dead. He will NOT fail you or those you are called to serve.

Assignments:

- 1) Go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) Search for and watch one action, real-world video from each of the four major divisions of emergency services – fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and emergency dispatching. Contemplate what it will be like to put yourself into the scene.

- 2) Go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for and watch the following videos:
 - a. “Emergency Service Chaplains Training” You will see me in front of a white screen in my black uniform

 - b. “Become a Volunteer Emergency Services Chaplain” You will see me standing beside my white Chevy Impala with the blue light bar.

 - c. “Emer Serv Chaplaincy – Jernigan Video” You may choose to embrace or disregard the promotional aspects of this video. The main idea is to let you know what the world of an emergency services chaplaincy looks like.

Congratulations! You have completed your first course on your way to becoming an emergency services chaplain.

What do I do now?

If you want to continue your training with us, see instructions in the next paragraph. If you do not plan to continue your training with us, nothing further is required. However, if you would like, you may make a special donation for the course you have just completed. But it

is NOT required. If you wish, you can send your check or money order to: Chaplain Robby Jernigan, P O Box 701, Marshfield, MO 65706 OR, you can send your extra donation as a Personal - Gift via PayPal to robbyj@ipa.net Your donation will be receipted by our not-for-profit ministry and will be tax deductible as allowed by law. OR, you may make a monthly pledge to our missionary ministry by send us an email indicating such.

How do I apply to continue my training as an emergency services chaplain?

Go to the home page of our website - - www.emergencychaplains.org - - and click on the tab "I Want To Take A Course." Go to Step Two of our application process and follow the instructions. We will need your basic information, references, and written salvation testimony, along with your \$20 application fee. If you have any questions, please send an email to: Chaplain Robby Jernigan - - robbyj@ipa.net

When you send us your Step Two information, you will need to include your written, salvation testimony. For help with preparing your salvation testimony, see the following guidelines.

Guidelines for Your Salvation Testimony

A good Christian, salvation testimony will include a brief description of your life before salvation, the details of your salvation experience, and finally how your life is different now that you are saved. Your testimony should NOT include sorted, gross, or gory details of your life before salvation that might embarrass you or your audience. It should include just enough details to help the hearer understand that you had a real need for repentance, forgiveness, and salvation. Even though embarrassing details are not appropriate, giving dramatic details that illustrate your life and experiences is certainly acceptable.

Regarding your salvation experience itself, draw a word picture for your audience. Tell things like how old you were, when and where it happened, who were the people who were important in the process, what did it look and feel like, what lead up to you making this decision, etc. Include a clear statement that you have accepted Jesus Christ as your

Savior and Lord (boss).

And finally, give details about how your life is different now as compared to what you used to be and do before salvation. Tell what application your salvation has in your life today.

General Comments Regarding Salvation

Many Christians point to the Gospel of John, Chapter 3 as a scripture reference for their born-again experience. They believe: 1) that it is only through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross that they have any hope of heaven, 2) that currently they trust in, cling to, and rely on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and His Lordship in their life as their only hope of eternal life, 3) that their salvation is by grace as a gift from God and not earned by good works, and 4) that their good works are a by-product of salvation by faith alone.

Some salvation-related scriptures: Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 10: 9 - 10, John 3: 3, 16, Revelation 3:20, Ephesians 1: 13

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