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Emergency Management Breakdown Aide Memoire

PURPOSE

This guide is proposed to help people recognise breakdowns within co-located and distributed teams, and provide some practical resolution strategies.

WHAT ARE BREAKDOWNS?

A breakdown occurs when teams lose the ability to coordinate or communicate effectively.

Breakdowns are caused by differences in understanding between teams. For example, not having a shared understanding across teams may lead to teams developing different operational plans, which in turn can lead to operational dysfunction. This guide aims to assist you in identifying breakdowns across the various organisational levels by listing some of the key indicators of breakdown. It also lists some strategies you may find useful in resolving a breakdown should one be detected.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN IDENTIFYING BREAKDOWNS...

- ☐ **Missing information:** How confident are you that you have the relevant information about the incident?
- ☐ **Conflicting expectations:** Is the information consistent with what you would expect to be happening in that situation?
- ☐ **Consistent information:** Is the information you have consistent across all sources?
- ☐ **Intuition:** Does your gut tell you something isn't right about the situation?
- ☐ **Familiarity:** Is someone familiar to you not behaving in a manner you have come to expect of them?
- ☐ **Networks:** Have you spoken about plans and problems with key personnel recently?
- ☐ **Feedback:** Have you received confirmation that the tasks you delegated have been completed?

HOW YOU MIGHT RESOLVE BREAKDOWNS...

1. **Delegate:** Find someone who is close to the breakdown or has the most appropriate skills and have them re-solve the issue. Remember to receive confirmation.
2. **Resource:** Breakdowns can be caused by missing resources. Find out what is missing, or what will assist the other teams, and get it to them.
3. **Mentor:** A subtle form of resolution, mentoring allows you to suggest alternatives, opinions and strategies without stepping on people's toes.
4. **Assert:** If you've tried more subtle strategies and they haven't worked you can use your authority to resolve the problem.
5. **Replace:** If breakdowns are occurring because of disruptive personalities in the management team, or even things like fatigue, you can stand them down or give them alternate duties.

LASTLY, ENSURE THOSE UNDER YOUR COMMAND UNDERSTAND WHAT A BREAKDOWN IS AND TO REPORT IT TO YOU.

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