



How to use the team monitoring tools

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BREAKDOWN AIDE MEMOIRE & TEAM PROCESS CHECKLIST

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMWORK

Teamwork is an increasingly important aspect of emergency management. As emergencies are becoming more complex and dynamic there are more people involved from multiple different agencies, many of whom will not know each other. Increasingly then it will be teamwork that defines our ability to manage large-scale fires, floods and storm events.

WHAT ARE THE TEAM MONITORING TOOLS?

The team monitoring tools comprise two checklists: The Emergency Management Breakdown Aide Memoire (EMBAM) and the Teamwork Process Checklist (TPC).

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BREAKDOWN AIDE MEMOIRE (EMBAM)

EMBAM helps to identify teamwork breakdowns and can be used within teams, between teams or across organisational levels. EMBAM includes two sections: Identification of Breakdowns and Resolution of Breakdowns. In the identification section are seven questions:

- **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?

These questions act as prompts to help you think about the information you are receiving to identify that a breakdown may have occurred.

EMBAM also contains a number of suggestions about how to resolve a breakdown when you are not in the team.

1. **Delegate:** Find someone who is close to the breakdown or has the most appropriate skills and have them resolve 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.

These suggestions progress from delegating someone to solve the problem through to removing an individual(s) from a team. Often breakdowns can be resolved by providing extra resources or through delegation, mentoring or asserting authority. However, on occasions it may be necessary to remove an individual from a team. This should be considered an extreme option. It must be done with careful consideration and may mean that damaged relationships need to be rebuilt after the event.

If EMBAM detects a problem or a more detailed health check of the teams is required then the TPC can be used.



TEAMWORK PROCESS CHECKLIST (TPC)

The TPC is designed to provide a health check for teams to make sure everything is working as it should and to identify problems in teamwork. The TPC is based on research into breakdowns by Wilson et al. (2007) and Bearman et al. (2015). It contains questions about the communication, coordination and cooperation of the team.

- Cooperation is the basic willingness to work as a team
- Coordination is concerned with who knows what and the timing of actions
- Communication is about who talks to whom, how they do it and when.

The checklist is designed so that you can read each of the questions and ask yourself whether the behaviour in the question is being demonstrated by the team. For example here are the items on coordination.

COORDINATION

- Are the roles and responsibilities of team members clear?
- Are actions always carried out as expected?
- Does everyone have a common understanding of mission information?
- Is there a clear and common purpose?
- Is everyone adjusting to meet the demands of the situation?
- Are team members requesting assistance from others, where necessary?
- Are team members correcting any mistakes made by others?

These statements help you to think about different aspects of teamwork and are some of the behaviours that you would expect to see in a high performing team.

DISCUSSING YOUR OBSERVATIONS WITH TEAM MEMBERS

The checklists are not designed to be an objective measure of teamwork and scores are not usually allocated to performance. After you've used the checklists to consider how your team are operating it's important to discuss your observations with the team members. Not only does this serve to validate your observations but it also gives people in the team a chance to comment, which provides a richer account of what happened and why. People are much more likely to take information on board

if you have a collaborative approach and take them with you on the journey.

USING TPC TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT TEAMWORK BEHAVIOURS

The TPC can also be used to build a better understanding of the kinds of processes that we expect in high performing teams. Typically, we don't have conversations about the teamwork behaviours that we expect from our teams. We do this to some extent in terms of technical behaviours (such as timely completion of warnings) but we rarely do this in terms of teamwork behaviours (such as sharing information or providing big picture situation updates). The checklist can be used to start discussions with the team about the need to show these behaviours and what they might look like in a particular situation. This can be done proactively before an emergency to build better teamwork and/or during an emergency to reinforce the team behaviours that are expected.

For example, during an emergency a regional commander might say in a briefing that they expect to see the team to be sharing mission critical information in a timely manner or they might say that this is going to be a very dynamic situation so team members may need to adjust more than normal to meet the demands of the situation and to look out for each other.

USING TPC FOR AFTER ACTION REVIEWS

In addition to proactively building teams and managing them during an emergency the TPC can be used to guide debriefs and after action reviews. Used in this way the questions on the checklist are used by the participants to reflect on how their team performed. This can either feed into group discussions about the team's performance or it can be used to highlight specific examples of good and bad teamwork. In the case of an after action review this would then be subject to an analysis that leads to formal recommendation that can improve teamwork. For more information on running an after action review workshop using TPC please contact the lead researcher at the address below.

MULTIPLE RATERS

It's a good idea to have multiple people rating a team's performance. This potentially allows you to pick up on a wider range of issues and provides someone who you can bounce ideas off. However, you need to make sure that all of the observers



are looking at team performance in the same way. While it's ok to disagree about something this needs to be done from a common ground. One way to develop an agreement about observations is to watch an extract of team performance and have everyone rate the performance of the team using the checklist. This can facilitate discussions so that people develop a common understanding of concepts and set benchmarks for behaviour. Remember it's ok for different people to interpret things in a different way. The checklist is designed to start conversations and develop a better understanding about what is going on.

KNOWLEDGE OF TEAMWORK CONCEPTS

The tools are designed to be used by people who have a basic level understanding of teamwork. However, as with anything the better you understand something the more you'll get out of it. Some resources to learn more about teamwork are provided on our website.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Research papers, industry reports and hazard notes about the team monitoring tools can be found on our website <https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/hazard-resilience/242>.

If you would like more information or have any questions please contact me. My contact details are below.

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