

WHITE PAPER

The Accountability Process - Saving Lives as an Incident Un- folds

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The Accountability Process

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The Accountability Process - Saving Lives as an Incident Unfolds

Introduction.

There is no magic bullet that will help account for staff at the onset of an incident through the first 0-4 and then 24-48 hours. It takes process and education and repeated drills in order to be sure that even a small percentage of staff can see through their own angst to follow the process during the onset of an incident. This is not an easy hill to climb and when you reach the top, you automatically slide down to the bottom, only to have to start again.

As many of us in the industry saw and experienced during 9/11, many people do not know who they are and how they will react during a catastrophic event. This makes it very difficult to ensure that we can establish a process with a set of guidelines and tools that help staff to focus on accountability. Many will become paralyzed; many will focus on leaving, period. This is understood and leaves us with a question: How can we establish evacuation and accountability processes when even our own Crisis Team/Safety Team and/or Fire Wardens are subject to their own responses to an incident that they may not be prepared to handle? And although we can create process, provide tools and guidelines, education and drills, we never really know how people are going to react. All drills are simulations. We can only hope that by repeating the educational sessions and drills that we eventually raise the percentage of those who will respond to the process and guidelines that we establish during the incident over a period of years.

We need to understand our community with whom we are trying to account for and remember that when they joined the particular firm with whom they are working, that they did not sign-on to deal with catastrophic events. They joined to better their career or their bank account/investments. And, as much as we try to explain that the world has changed, staff are not yet ready to take this on as part of the working requirement.

Every process has an entity. Here, the entities are staff; the wireless network and the event, itself. Every one of these entities are a major variable that cannot be controlled. We can only do the best we can to train, educate, exercise. The rest is up to those entities engaged in the process at the time of the incident.

We started this article by saying that there is no magic bullet. This is true. Because of the variables; e.g. the incident; staff response; health/welfare of the communications systems, we cannot establish a single process but rather, suggest a series of processes, establish educational venues, provide a phased-in approach to accountability through various means of communication and finally, ensure that staff have the necessary tools supporting a strong communications process.

What is key to Accountability? Commitment to Communication.

The Accountability Process

What is Accountability?

Accountability is a process that can potentially save lives by determining through process and visual and abbreviated methods of communication, status of staff within the first 0-1 hour; 1-4 hours; 4-8 hours and 24/48 hours after the onset of a catastrophic event.

The goal of the process is to attempt to save lives and identify staff status (who needs medical assistance, who may still be left in the building) and to communicate this information to a First Responder to better direct their search into the building.

Accountability focusses on saving lives on the onset of the event and through the first 24-48 hours. This is the time when we need to know who needs medical attention (whether physical or psychological); who is available to continue with the business process; who may have died as a result of the event. This process directly affects the health and welfare of the Business as Accountability of staff focusses on the most important asset of any Company: its staff.

Benefits of Staff Accountability.

1. Will hopefully save lives on the onset of an event by being able to find staff when they need medical attention.
2. To help First Responders re-direct their search into a building by providing: a street address, a map of the floor (ingress/egress points of the building and the layout of an uninjured floor); the name of a person that can help the person respond when they may be medically or psychologically spent.
3. To help to save the lives of First Responders by providing a more directed search.
4. To help healing of staff by being able to account for staff quickly at the onset of an event - cutting short the time at the assembly point so that they may leave the area and connect with their family.
5. To support the resiliency of the business by being able to identify available staff and their status.

What Accountability is Not.

Accountability is not a notification process; e.g. a run-through of the call tree process, although it uses the process and call tree information. The Call Tree is a notification tool, not an accountability process.

Accountability cannot be performed by an automated notification/response system. We can never be sure that the “response key” was pressed because the person was alive or due to falling debris that happened to hit the key.

Most importantly, we can never assume that anyone is not in danger until we can visualize them or receive some response from them through texting, email or, if possible, cellular call.

Buy-In.

As many know, it can be difficult to get “buy-in” for the business and the staff to maintain their call trees. There is no way around this, unfortunately. Whether maintained on spreadsheets or with notification systems, a plan is required to determine resource requirements and costs for the call tree maintenance process.

“Buy-In” is required from the following Departments: Human Resources; the CEO; the Department Head; the Business BCP representatives and the Administrator.

One would hope that these sponsors understand that Accountability saves lives and moves the Business Community out of the incident phase to that of the healing and resilience.

Most importantly, you must be able to gather “buy-in” from staff. They are the people who will have to make a choice to engage in accountability, at whatever point in the process. They have to be able to reconcile who they are/become at the onset and during the first 48 hours of an event and be able to see the need to move away from their fears and previous experience to engage or just even communicate their status.

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The Accountability Process - A Phased-In Approach.

If we look at the complete end-to-end process, we find that we may need a phased-in approach because we want to answer the following questions:

1. Did staff evacuate the building?
2. Is staff safe?
3. Can we account for staff who are in the hospital or who have passed on as a result of the incident?
4. Did staff make it home?
5. Are critical staff able to assume their roles to respond to the next-day mission critical business process?
6. If critical staff have not been accounted for is the team of alternates available to assume the role of critical staff to perform the mission critical process.

We need to identify various means of communication based time as it moves away from the event and where staff are in the overall, end-to-end process. For example, we may account for staff at the assembly point, but they still have to make it home; still need to check in - especially to gather information from their Management or actually identify that they are able to fulfill the role of performing mission critical business processes the next day. So, this is a process that unfolds over time.

Time	Action	Accountability Phase	Tool
0-1 Hour	Evacuation Assembly	0 Phase 1 Phase	NA Visual Recognition Texting: Blackberry/Cell Email: Blackberry/Cell
1-4 Hour	Leaving the Area	NA	NA
4-8 Hour	Arrive Home	2 Phase	Emergency Hotline Landline or Cell
8-12 Hour	Departmental Conference Call	3 Phase	Departmental Hotline Landline or Cell
Next Morning	Departmental Conference Call	4 Phase	Departmental Hotline Landline or Cell

Let's review a basic process and then identify the various means of communication that staff may have at their hand.

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1. Staff follow directions of Corporate Security or Building Management/Director of Fire/Safety regarding Evacuation.
2. Staff evacuate and are directed to the Assembly Point.
3. PHASE I ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff visibly account for staff and identify staff who are not at the Assembly Point by take note on their call trees.
4. Staff attempt texting/emailing the missing staff quickly. Staff wait roughly 3 minutes between calls and only make 2 attempts.
5. Staff follow direction of Corporate Security or Building Management/Director of Fire/Safety regarding leaving the Assembly Point.
6. Staff provide their call tree to the Corporate Security/Building Manager Fire/Safety Team or to a First Responder in order to direct their search back into the building to look for staff that are known not to be accounted for.
7. Staff leave the area and at a point of safety and connect with their families.

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8. PHASE 2 ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff arrive home and call into the Emergency Hotline to leave their status re: arrival home.
9. PHASE 3 ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff commence their Departmental Conference Calls via their Conference Bridge to discuss business status and next day continuance of the business process. The Department Manager or Alternate communicate their results re: accountability with their Business Head or Alternate on the Crisis Management Team.
10. PHASE 4 ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff re-commence their Departmental Conference Call via their Conference Bridge, at the allotted time or through trigger of a notification call/system, to discuss any changes in Accountability that may have occurred through the night and hence any changes to the continuation of the business. The Department Manager or Alternate communicate their results re: accountability with their Business Head or Alternate on the Crisis Management Team.
11. PHASE 5 ACCOUNTABILITY: Business Continuity and Human Resource Teams review the input from the Hotline and the Departmental Conference Calls and begin identifying who is still missing. The first list would be sent to Corporate Security within 24 hours of the event and a revised list, 48 hours. Corporate Security will then work with City Agencies to perform Search/Rescue and create death certificates.

There are those who may prefer to leave on their own volition. In this case, the process can look like this:

1. Staff evacuation the building on their own volition.
2. Staff leave the area and at a point of safety connect with their families.
3. PHASE 1 ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff responds to any emails or text messages, if possible, from those attempting to account to them.
4. PHASE 2 ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff arrive home and call into the Emergency Hotline to leave their status re: arrival home.
5. PHASE 3 ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff commence their Departmental Conference Calls via their Conference Bridge to discuss business status and next day continuance of the business process.
6. PHASE 4 ACCOUNTABILITY: Staff re-commence their Departmental Conference Call via their Conference Bridge, at the allotted time or through trigger of a notification call/system, to discuss any changes in Accountability that may have occurred through the night and hence any changes to the continuation of the business.
7. PHASE 5 ACCOUNTABILITY: Business Continuity and Human Resource Teams review the input from the Hotline and the Departmental Conference Calls and begin identifying who is still missing. They make an attempt to communicate with those who are missing and their family to determine status.
 - The first list would be sent to Corporate Security within 24 hours of the event and a revised list, 48 hours. Corporate Security will then work with City Agencies to perform Search/Rescue and create death certificates.

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The Components of the Accountability Process

The accountability process can include as little as the hard-copy call tree; the Emergency Hotline and the Departmental Conference calling number to the following components:

Process Entities.

Process Entity	Description
The Business Continuity Team	This team includes the Business Continuity Representatives for each business.
The Call Tree Administration Team	This team is comprised of those who maintain the call tree. They may or may not include the Business Continuity Representative).
The Crisis Management Team	This team is comprised of Senior Business Heads; e.g. those who can make business decisions.
The Accountability Team	This team is comprised of members of the core Business Continuity and Human Resource department who is responsible for gathering accountability information from the Hotline and the Departmental Conference Calls.
Staff and their Families	We ask staff to inform their families of the Accountability Process so that they can call on their behalf if they do not have the where-withall to do so upon returning home.

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Sub-Processes/Pre-Processes/Successive Processes.

<p>The Call Tree Process</p>	<p>The Call Tree is a basic for every business no matter what kind. For larger businesses, there should be one for each Department/Business. The call tree process is comprised of Primary and Alternates who are accountable for accounting for/notification of no more than 3-5 people.</p> <p>If you do not know where to start, try your organization chart but remember the 3 rules:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No-one should be asked to be a primary or alternate. You cannot force anyone to following anything other than their instinct during a time of danger. 2. Determine whether the primaries and alternates have the personality to follow the process. Provide readiness training if they are willing to go through this. 3. If you have staff in various buildings or resident on separate floors group the team geographically. In this case, you may need to abandon the organization chart as a structure and choose primaries and alternates based on their ability to perform these roles. Remember, asking someone on one floor to be accountable for someone on another floor does not work. It could potentially the safety of both people. <p>The Call Tree Process is supported by the information gathered for each member of the Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Number; • Emergency Number (someone you can call on behalf of the Staff member); • Cellular Number (for texting); • Blackberry or PDA (for texting/emailing). <p>NOTE: The Home and Emergency numbers are used during PHASE 5: when the Accountability team attempts to account for staff who may not have engaged in the process.</p>
<p>The Call Tree Maintenance Process.</p>	<p>The call tree information should be revised 2-4 times a year or as changes occur with staff communications information.</p>
<p>The Call Tree Testing Process.</p>	<p>The call tree should be tested at least 4 times a year based on changes in staffing.</p>

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<p>The Notification Hotline Ownership and Maintenance process.</p>	<p>Work with your telecommunications provider regarding the purchase of an off-premise hotline. Understand the functions and how they may help your Accountability Process. Define a team who will perform the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Owns the number, maintains the relationship with the Telecommunications provider to ensure that it is viable, when maintenance periods are, the design and functionalities/changes in functionalities. 2. Creates/changes greetings 3. Answers the phone during an incident. If your business is in different regions, you can create teams that help each other out from region-to-region. If your business is in one city, try to find a number that can be redirected to live operators to take messages during the first 0-8 hours of an incident. 4. Access voice mail boxes
<p>The Evacuation Process,</p>	<p>The Evacuation process should be known for supporting both fire and non-fire emergencies and the action of being escorted to the Assembly point.</p>
<p>Assembly Point Process</p>	<p>With the advent of Local Law 26.04, assembly points have to be as far away from the building as it is tall to avoid injury as the result of falling debris.</p>
<p>The Accountability Process.</p>	<p>The phased-in process of accounting for people during the onset of an incident through 48 hours after the incident.</p>
<p>The Crisis Management Team Process.</p>	<p>The Crisis Management Team is comprised of those Senior Directors in the business who are tasked with making decisions regarding the business and are responsible for the business process - including Staff Accountability</p>
<p>The City/State Search and Rescue Process.</p>	<p>After 24-48 hours, communication with City/State Agencies are required to inform them of missing staff for search/rescue and then recovery.</p>
<p>The Business Human Resource Policies</p>	<p>Human Resources or the Business Management needs to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How staff will continue to be paid during/after an incident. Some companies pay staff the same amount as their last check and pay the difference in the following pay period. 2. How will the Company handle benefits to staff who have been injured or who may have died? 3. If there is a period when only partial staffing is engaged, how will you account for staff who may not be working? Vacation? Paid Day. 4. The business management may want to consider a remote access solution for staff which becomes a human resource policy.

The Accountability Process

Tools

Hard Copy - Call Tree	<p>A hard-copy of the call tree process: with a map of the floor, the address and floor of staff written in words, the actual call tree with home, cell and office numbers and the date of the issue of the hard copy.</p> <p>To be available to provide to a first responder to direct their search in the building. The hard copy provides the following information:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The map. To provide the First Responder with an understanding of the floor layout. 2. An address and floor number of the facility. 3. A name. Calling someone's name - even if they are partially unconscious can bring someone back to consciousness and perhaps save their life.
Electronic Version - Call Tree	<p>An electronic version of the call tree process in the Address Books of their PDA or cell permits ease of texting.</p> <p>Texting only works with cellular numbers. By ensuring that Staff enter the numbers they need onto their PDA/Blackberry and Cells, they have a better chance of sending text messages without any delay.</p>
Departmental Conference Bridge	<p>Departmental Conference Bridge permits staff to perform the third phase of accountability: communication as a member of the business.</p>
Hotline/Emergency Hotline Number	<p>An off-premise Company-Specific Accountability Hotline. So staff can perform the second phase of accountability as soon as they reach a point of safety and as the network permits.</p> <p>Preferably, this is an off-premise number provided by a Long Distance Provider where the number may be re-directed to a live operator who can take accountability messages for the Business Continuity Team to establish lists.</p> <p>So staff can perform the second phase of accountability as soon as they reach a point of safety and as the network permits.</p> <p>Preferably, this is an off-premise number provided by a Long Distance Provider where the number may be re-directed to a live operator who can take accountability messages for the Business Continuity Team to establish lists.</p>
Desk Card	<p>A desk card with all important information.</p>
Quarterly Desk Drop	<p>A desk drop for quarterly reminders</p>
Family Hand-Out	<p>A hand-out to take home to families and friends.</p>
Emergency Notification System	<p>This kind of system performs a two-fold purpose:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It becomes the actual repository for the call tree information; 2. It can house the hard-copy call tree templates for ease of producing and printing.
Company Web-Site	<p>Use the web-site to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep staff and families informed 2. List the Accountability Lists

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Educational Requirements

Knowledge of text messaging.	Texting rather than calling is a proven solution. during times of over-saturation of the wireless network, however, not if the network devices are impacted by the event.
The Building Evacuation Process; The Building-Directed Assembly Point.	The Corporate Security or Building Management Director of Fire/Safety plans for Fire Emergency and Non-Fire Emergency; evacuation process; assembly point.
The Accountability process	The Accountability Process can be presented at the same time as the walkthrough of the Business Continuity Plan is performed and then monthly for new employees
Family Training	Training to the family to make accountability calls on behalf of staff who are not able to or do not want to engage in the process.

Issues

Staff may not follow the Corporate Security/Building Management Fire/Safety Director instructions or evacuation process and choose to leave the building on their own volition.	In some states, you cannot force anyone to follow any process during an emergency. In this case, you have provided the phased-in process, family training and tools to ensure that staff call in sometime within the 0-24/38 hour time-period. In a worst-case, you have the emergency numbers and can begin calling their homes and emergency numbers for status.
Staff will not want to go to the Assembly point.	See Above
Staff will not be willing to actually account for those staff that they are responsible for as they are overcome by their own psychological needs during the event.	You may have to check in with the ability of a primary or alternate to perform this work when you are establishing a process. The time taken to pick staff based on their ability to do this will save lives later.
Staff will not want to call into the Accountability number once they are out of harms way as they are overcome by their own psychological needs during the event.	In a worst-case, you have the emergency numbers and can begin calling their homes and emergency numbers for status.
Staff will not want to call into the Departmental Conference Bridge at night.	Family training can help resolve this.
Staff do not normally subscribe to more than 1 wireless carrier. It will be difficult to use the wireless system if it becomes over-saturated or suffers from the incident, itself.	Ensure that your call tree has various ways to contact staff: home number; all cells; emergency number.
Some staff do not own a cell phone.	This becomes a corporate policy issue and an item for education. Staff need to understand how important communication is during an incident. At this point we have beepers and cell phones. Educating them to the importance of being able to communicate with them and their family may resolve this.

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<p>Some staff do not want to incur costs for text messaging.</p>	<p>a text message costs about .10 cents is you do not have a package. .10 cents means alot if you can identify whether someone needs help in an emergency or not. Again, this becomes a corporate policy or an education item.</p>
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The Accountability Process

Where do you start?

Remember the adage: "Safety First." With this in mind, create your Crisis Management Team, call tree and communications first. Then, continue with the rest of the items, based on your business requirement.

Communication.

1. Create the call tree process (primary/alternate callers and who will be accountable for who) for each Business/ Department.
2. Identify who will be accountable for the call tree process and for its administration.
3. Gather the call tree information: Office, Home, Cellular, Emergency Numbers.
4. Create the hard copy call tree/electronic call tree.
5. Determine how staff will communicate their status and purchase a hotline / emergency number if possible.
 - If you prefer now to have have number answered by people, purchase voice mail box/boxes per business and ensure that everyone is educated on how to leave / access messages.
 - Determine two primary and two alternates who will own the number, be accountable for required logons and passwords as well as change greetings.
 - Create the team who will gather and analyze the accountability information.
6. Test the call tree with staff.
7. Test the Hotline number with staff.

Evacuation/Assembly Points.

1. Check with your Corporate Security or Building Manager regarding their fire and non-emergency plan with a focus on Evacuation and Assembly point.
2. If your Building Manager has not defined an evacuation plan, call your local Fire Department for support.
3. If your Building Manager has not defined an Assembly point, choose a point that is as far away from the building as it is tall.
4. Train your staff on evacuating including where all of the exits are - no matter which floor they are on and egress points of the building so that they know where they come out onto the street. This avoids disorientation in case of an evacuation.
5. Schedule an evacuation Drill with Corporate Security or Building Manager/Fire-Safety Director. In most cases, these drills are already scheduled.

Crisis Management Team.

If you do not have a Crisis Management Team/Process, create one and schedule/perform regular drills.

Business Continuity Planning.

If you do not have a Business Continuity Process, create one and schedule/perform bi-annual reviews or as your business changes.

Tools

1. Decide on your desk-drops/hand-outs. Be sure to include those items that would be prepared for families.

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2. Decide on whether to purchase a notification system.
3. Decide on whether to purchase a hotline number.
4. Decide on whether to purchase departmental conference numbers.
5. Contact your Human Resources department to determine their policies re: incidents. If you do not have any policies, create them.
6. Contact the City Office of Emergency Management regarding how to inform staff

Last Thoughts.

There are many good technical ideas and projects that are now moving through the industry. In some cases their goal is to provide tools for First Responders to determine whether there are people on an impacted floor. These ideas are excellent but require additional work. The IEEE 802.11k specification is now being worked on that will map RFID/Cellular identifiers. But the components and the level of manufacturing is still pending. Here, the staff's security/access id and a wireless network with a device could potentially find staff on a floor that may be impacted. With a request to gather vital statistics on the person, the First Responder could identify whether they may still be alive and then alert additional medical support. But we must remember 2 points:

1. A good idea has a life-cycle process that includes development/testing/manufacturing and re-education of those who have to use the device/software. In order for this to really work, the building must also support the deployment of an access system that uses the RFID specification and a wireless network that supports the 802.11k specification. We have to be realistic about what it takes to bring these ideas to fruition.
2. According to a member of the 802.11 Committee, 802.11k is not yet available to manufacturers but may be by the end of 2008. We recommend that manufacturers communicate with the IEEE to determine the specifications in order to manifest this functionality in their floor scanning solutions.
3. There is no machine that can account for people. It still takes people to query and it still takes people to respond.