



Practical Lessons from 9/11

Insights

9.11.18

For me, the anniversary of 9/11 is principally for remembering and paying respect to the 2996 victims at the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and that Pennsylvania field, as well as the many individuals who have lost their lives and limbs since that day protecting their fellow citizens. Thousands in Iraq, Afghanistan and others in hot spots around the world ... or in the day to day accidents that are inevitable to the operation and training of our military. (See, [The Cost of War Since September 11, 2001](#) and [The DOD Casualty Report](#)) I realized the other day that because of IEDs, it is now common to see young men and women with high-tech artificial legs. The list could go for pages if we consider emergency responders, police, various civil servants and countless others.

The book, ***Starship Troopers*** is remembered for the fun and campy movie version but the book was actually controversial because it described a post-WW III society where the benefits of life were available to all, but only veterans could vote or serve in office. Regardless of whether one agrees with that premise, the book's description of a citizen described the sacrificial behavior of those who protect their fellow citizens and others:

"Citizenship is an attitude, a state of mind, an emotional conviction that the whole is greater than the part...and that the part should be humbly proud to sacrifice itself that the whole may live." — Robert A. Heinlein, [Starship Troopers](#)

Or as George Orwell bluntly put it:

"People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

Or read the [US Army Values](#).

One doesn't have to be a militarist or to agree with a particular philosophy to be thankful for those individuals who put their own wellbeing second to protecting others.

I am deeply thankful to my dad who was a WW II and Korean War vet and a 16 month POW in Stalag 17. A scared 19-year old braving 26 bombing missions at a time when about six of ten bombers didn't return. I am thankful for the cop working third shift and the young kids with new buzz cuts traveling in the airports.

Who are you thankful for today?

Emergency Planning and Response, Continuity and “What If?”

Did you know that it is **National Preparedness Month**? Both **FEMA** and **OSHA** are actively using this month to promote preparedness by individuals and businesses. Given the 9/11 Anniversary and the start of the storm season, the timing is obvious.

My wife and I just read James Patterson and Bill Clinton’s surprisingly good book, ***“The President is Missing.”*** Courtesy of former President Clinton’s past experience and contacts, the book reminds us of plausible and even likely it is that someday our electrical grid, water distribution system, or financial markets may be physically disrupted or harmed by cyber warfare. Ted Koppel was so worried that he wrote a nonfiction book, ***“Lights Out,”*** a few years ago that will chill you with an explanation of why some sort of event is likely, and that government, utilities and citizens are not undertaking reasonable counter steps and preparation. And of course, recent Russian intrusions and efforts to influence voting in a number of countries, North Korea’s devastating hack of Sony and recent cyber-attacks on cities” IT systems are on all of our minds.

And consider the oncoming Hurricane Season, winter weather, tornadoes and other natural risks. See 2017’s detailed FP Business Hurricane Response FAQs, which have been repeatedly revised since Katrina:

Comprehensive FAQs For Employers On Hurricanes And Other Workplace Disasters

September 6, 2017 ... employment-related issues facing employers in the wake of **hurricane**-related disasters; consequently, in addition to federal laws, ... is of more widespread applicability than just the 2017 **hurricanes**, and may be helpful following any unexpected natural ...

We have learned from Katrina, California fires, Houston and Puerto Rico, but has the typical business adequately considered the effects of natural and manmade disasters on operations and how to restore and maintain operations

What-If Planning.

I have written in many settings on the need for a “What-if Committee,” recently in the context of the corporate damage wreaked on entertainment and other businesses by the egregious executive behavior exposed by the #Me Too movement. See my Post, ***“What If, Harassment, Me Too, and the Media.”***

While the sophistication of the effort varies based on the size and type of business, location, markets and other factors, every employer should periodically gather management responsible for areas such as: Executive Leadership, Supply Chain, HR, Media and Advertising, Sales, Maintenance and Engineering, Safety and Security, and other relevant disciplines.

And go through a What-if Analysis. Businesses who have evaluated Combustible Dust or Process Safety Management (refineries, chemicals, etc.) understand the basics of this exercise. Basically, list every conceivable hazard to operations and continuity, evaluate the level of potential harm, and the probability. Determine the greatest risks by degree of harm. Weigh probability. Brainstorm and think of the cascading problems that would occur. Determine steps to prevent or mitigate harm, and develop plans to respond to the events, maintain business or restart. Never forget the human factor. Our responses differ from mechanical operations and may be anything but logical.

Apply this analysis to hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, earthquakes or other natural disasters depending on risk. Consider workplace shootings and security issues, the effect of pandemics, cyber-attacks ... whatever is relevant. Brainstorm and look for the obscure or simply unrecognized hazards. The exercise can also lead to quality and operational improvements. And don't forget potential harm to utilities.

Lessons We've Learned.

I recall working with major Gulf area businesses in the days following Katrina trying to determine how to assist employees when banks, ATMs and all retail were down, not to mention safety lessons associated with clean up and receding water. Forest fires have taught utilities and cable providers lessons about reducing risk. Shootings have not only led to security improvements but also to making "Trauma Packs" available in First Aid kits. Houston and other similar events created potable water issues for weeks afterwards, and we'll be processing lessons from Puerto Rico for years.

What Have You Learned?

We all chuckle at the inevitable rush for milk and bread as snow approaches. However, what have you done in the event that a storm disrupted utilities for a week? What if your city or region's electric grid went down for two weeks? Water, gas and sewage would soon stop. Grocery stores carry about a week's worth of product at best. One need not be a Prepper, but do you keep several weeks of canned or freeze-dried food? Basic water containers or purification tablets? Batteries and small solar chargers? Essential prescriptions? A bit of cash?

Let's not be caught unprepared.

[FEMA](#)

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