

PREPTalks

New perspectives for emergency managers



CENTER FOR HOMELAND
DEFENSE AND SECURITY
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Building a Mission-Driven Culture

Brian Fennessy

Agenda

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Introductions (5 minutes)

Watch the PrepTalks (20 minutes)

Discussion (30 minutes)

Introduction



- Brian Fennessy is fire chief in Orange County, California and has held executive leadership positions in other wildland and metropolitan fire services
- He is qualified at multiple Incident Command System positions, served on National Incident Management Teams, and developed one of the first All-Hazard Incident Management Teams in the country. He is also a National Wildfire Coordinating Group Leadership Committee primary member

Watch the PrepTalk

<https://www.fema.gov/blog/preptalks-brian-fennessy-building-mission-driven-culture>

Topics

- What is Mission-Driven Culture?
- Accountability in a Mission-Driven Culture
- Implementing a Mission-Driven Culture

Topic 1: What is Mission-Driven Culture?

A mission-driven culture is a system of decentralized decision making, guided by a leader's intent and combined with the authority and expectation to act.

Values of a mission-driven culture

1. Service for the Common Good: A commitment that all actions and decisions will contribute to the desired team result.
2. High Trust State: Developing trust in systems and people which lays the foundation for effective decision making.
3. Pursuit of Truth: Includes an emphasis on maximum situational awareness through detailed questioning, active listening, and confirmation.
4. Form & Function Defined by the End State: A willingness to refine the framework based on evolving needs.
5. Individual Initiative: Promotion of individual actions to take advantage of opportunities and solve problems within the bounds of the leader's intent.
6. Continuous Improvement: Promoting continuous learning and improvement both organizationally and individually.

In periods of chaos, uncertainty, and ambiguity our standard command and control doesn't work.

— Brian Fennessy

Topic 1: What is Mission-Driven Culture?



1. How would you describe the differences between command and control vs. mission-driven culture?
2. What examples have you seen or experienced where critical decisions were constrained by adherence to policy?
3. What examples have you seen or experienced of a mission-driven culture? Either within your organization or other organizations?
4. How would a shift to mission-driven culture change how your organization achieves its goals? How would it benefit your staff?

Topic 2: Accountability in a Mission-Driven Culture

- Accountability in a mission-driven culture should be greater than in traditional command and control organizations:
 - Leader's define expectations through intent: task, purpose, end state.
 - Staff are empowered to make decisions to achieve the end state, guided by the leader's task and purpose.
 - Staff make responsible judgement calls in difficult or rapidly evolving situations.
- Legal Counsel Support
 - Leaders must gain support from legal counsel before trying to implement a Mission Drive Culture.
 - Staff must need to be reassured by their leaders that they and the legal team "have their back" if a decision leads to a bad outcome.
 - This enables staff to act decisively in difficult or rapidly evolving situations.

There are going to be mistakes — hopefully not a lot of big ones, but there will be mistakes, and who hasn't learned more from their mistakes?

— Brian Fennessy

Topic 3: Implementing a Mission-Driven Culture

- Chief Fennessy describes ways to implement a mission-driven culture.
 - Communicate the need for a shift in culture
 - Build trust and provide re-assurance to staff and leaders.
 - Model the values of a mission-driven culture
 - Begin by shifting toward defining daily work with leader's intent
- Leader's intent is a clear, concise statement about what people must do to succeed in their assignments.
 - Task: State the objective or goal of the assignment
 - Purpose: Why the assignment needs to be done.
 - End state: How the situation should look when the assignment is successfully completed.

It's no good if we at the top all agree that this is the way to operate, but we've got an operator mid-level that is not bought in.

— Brian Fennessy

Topic 3: Implementing a Mission-Driven Culture



1. How can you ensure staff understand leader's intent?
2. Do you have a process to evaluate whether your staff feel
3. empowered to make independent decisions?
4. What are ways that you can recognize and celebrate independent decision making to underscore management's commitment to mission-driven culture?
5. How can you track the benefits of implementing a mission-driven culture? What are some measurements you could use?

PrepTalks. New Perspectives for Emergency Managers.

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www.fema.gov/preptalks