



General comments about Safety in Emergency Response Agencies:

SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY!

We hear it all the time in Emergency Response. Why then do we have such a difficult time with it?

If your agency is like most, you have a few people that drive safety all the time. It may be one or two of your members or your Safety Officer or other Officers. But generally those pushing safety are few and they are most likely frowned on by the general population of the agency.

You might be asking yourself why! And you might be thinking to yourself, “Don’t Emergency Responders want to be Safe?” The answer to the question is of course, Yes. Generally speaking most people think they are safe when in essence they are right on the edge of being safe. When you add the dangers of Emergency Response that edge gets thinner all the time which puts us at a risk of getting injured.

In order to understand why we have such a hard time with safety we need to look at those who volunteer their time to serve in our agencies. They are a mix of the general population of our communities. Some of these people are never faced with safety concerns because of their lifestyles. Take the volunteer who is self employed, they seldom hear safety messages from any higher authority and they never see an OSHA or NIOSH flyer about safety. What about our volunteer who works in the local retail outlet? Same scenario, they are never exposed professionally to the need to improve safety issues. So generally they think they are safe.

Enter the engineer or safety professional from industry that is exposed to safety issues professionally. We generally ask this person to be our Safety Officer and give them the thankless task of overall agency safety, and then we ignore them.

We need to understand that improving safety is actually changing culture. This culture change not only involves your agency but it also involves the culture of the individuals that make up your agency. This is where the frustration comes in because the person given the task to oversee safety can see a vision but those who are not presented with safety regularly look at the Safety Officer as an alien from outer space.

How do you win? Contact us for more information.