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Introduction

Today, we are experiencing drastic changes in various aspects of our society.

The structure of urban areas has also been undergoing drastic changes, including advanced traffic networks such as bullet trains, highways and subways and construction of higher, deeper and larger-scale commercial facilities such as underground shopping streets, skyscrapers and ballpark domes.

In addition, utilization of hazardous materials including radioactive and toxic materials has been increasing. Should these substances be involved in an accident or disaster, there may be immediate danger to the lives of people.

It is true that, thanks to these advancements, we are enjoying convenient and comfortable life. However, it is also true that these advancements have increased the danger to our life, health and property due to diversifying accidents and disasters.

To meet the challenges which conventional rescue techniques and equipment cannot cope with, Osaka Fire Department re-organized rescue system to establish special rescue companies for specific disasters.

Today in Osaka, rescue services are provided by a total of 28 rescue companies including 4 urban disaster rescue companies, 4 chemical disaster rescue companies, 4 aviation rescue companies and 16 conventional rescue companies.

Any rescue activity must be performed in a safe, secure and prompt manner based on the correct judgment of the situation of accident or disaster. Capability of exact judgment, decision and direction is required for each commanding officer to control the rescue company in good order and to enable each rescue member to exhibit his or her highest skill.

Therefore, each commanding officer must make every endeavor to continuously acquire the knowledge and skill which can meet the requirements of ever-advancing society. Through self-development, a commanding officer must always be prepared to control his or her members to effectively save victims at an occurrence of disaster or accident.

1. Characteristics of rescue activity

“Rescue activity” refers to the activities to save victims who are in danger of death or injury due to an accident or disaster and unable to escape from the situation by themselves. The rescue activities must be performed in a safe, secure and prompt manner under any situation. The characteristics which any rescue activities encounter include:

1. Dangerous works
2. It is impossible to predict an accident or disaster
3. Accident or disaster site is in chaos, acute and highly strained.

Rescue Processes

- 1) Information Collection → 2) Judgement of Situation →
- 3) Decision → 4) Command → 5) Rescue activity →
- 6) Correction for Rescue activity

2. Judgment of situation

No commander can make decision of rescue procedure without correct judgment of situation of the disaster site regardless of his or her ability.

To attain exact judgment of the situation, a commander must understand the whole, not a part such as danger, of the accident or disaster by fully utilizing his or her five senses (see, hear, touch, smell and think) . It is also necessary to collect information by interviewing the people involved to the accident or disaster. Decision by guessing based on partial information must be strictly avoided.

A commanding officer must:

1. Confirm the site, scale and type of the accident or disaster.
2. Confirm the condition, situation and number of victims.

3. Confirm or estimate the obstruction of rescue activity and the possibility of secondary disaster.
4. Interview people involved to the accident or disaster.

3. Decision

To control the rescue activity safely, effectively and in good order, a commanding officer must give information and issue commands to his or her members correctly and timely without being affected by the chaos of the rescue site.

Delay of decision of a commanding officer will lose the order of rescue members and result in increased danger of secondary disaster and less effective rescue activity.

1. A commanding officer must not hesitate to make decision due to a reason such as insufficient information.
2. A commanding officer must not alter rescue plan once he or she determined even when some changes occur to the situation of disaster site.
3. If a commanding officer had to make decision based on insufficient information, he or she must make every endeavor to continue to collect more information.
4. Direction of rescue procedure must be given to the members in a practical manner.

4. Command

A command is an important communication method to make the members to follow the rescue procedure he or she decided.

A command must be clear enough to direct his or her policy and the role of each individual rescue members. A commanding officer must issue commands with firm belief so that the procedure he or she decided is perfectly attained.

1. A command must not be too detailed. A commanding officer must not go so far to restrict every detailed action of a member but allow some margin for determination by each individual member.
2. A command must be issued, taking into consideration the ability and personality of each member.
3. The commander should have the members report, taking into account the members' capabilities and personalities.
4. For important command, a commanding officer must have measures to assure that the command is received by each individual members.
5. Clearly directing the role and responsibility of each individual member is effective in controlling the rescue company.
6. A command should be given through the pre-specified direction system. However, an urgent command may be given directly to the relating member.

5. Systematic activity

Diversifying disasters and accidents due to advancement of society require more efficient strategy of rescue activity than ever.

Performing all necessary duties such as information collection and issuance of commands within a limited time length is beyond the capacity of a commanding officer, even if he or she is a very excellent commander.

1. Efficient systematic activity cannot be attained without full understanding of both the commanding officer and members about the essence of, and activity patters required for, systematic activity.
2. A commanding officer must always discharge efforts to attain better results of systematic activity by making the best use of staff of commanding team.

6. Rule observance

Observing each rule is one of the most important requirements for systematic rescue activity.

With the full awareness that rule observance is based on the trust between the upper and lower classes of members of a rescue company, a commanding office must make every endeavor to strictly maintain the order of his/her rescue company.

1. The essence of order is obedience to commands.
2. Rescue activity is performed in abnormal strain under unstable condition. Therefore, systematic activity cannot be maintained without strong, absolute and even autocratic leadership.
3. Commands with the respect to humanity is effective to stiffen the morale and maintain order of the members of rescue company.
4. An impartial evaluation is one of the most important requirements to maintain the order of a rescue company.
5. Commanding officers must be determined to obey strict rules themselves before they ask their member for obedience.

7. Self-development

To perform the important duty of commanding a rescue company, a commanding officer must discharge continuing efforts to improve his or her character and acquire knowledge and skill so that he or she can be respected and trusted by his or her members.

1. What is required for a commanding officer is power and ability in action which is becoming to the power. No commanding officer can perform his or her duty without the power and ability in action.
2. A commanding officer must evaluate his or her own experience or action from the viewpoint of a third party and use the evaluation results as the lessons for future performance of his or her duty.
3. A commanding office can learn excellent lessons from the experiences of others only if he or she is always determined to learn.

4. To make the best use of knowledge in each activity, simulation training must be performed so that the knowledge is mastered by “body”.

Conclusion

Today of the 21st century, the world is becoming closer and closer due to scientific advancements, and the information of events occurring everywhere in the world is available to us even at real time.

However, such scientific advancements cannot eliminate the death of people due to natural disasters such as earthquake and typhoon and accidents such as plane crash, sinking of ships and train accidents. The reality is that many people are killed by these accidents and natural disasters.

As the workers in charge of disaster prevention, we must enhance the international cooperation to develop new rescue strategies and equipment to cope with potential disasters.

At closing, I would like to thank you all for your participation to this training seminar in Japan. It was my great pleasure that I had a chance to study with you.

From my deepest heart, I hope your success in your country.