

**Leadership In  
Times of Crisis**



# Agenda

- Types of Emergencies We Should be Planning For:
  - Routine, Crisis, and Emergent Crises
- Seven Essential Skills Needed to Manage These Events
- Looking Back – An Event We Can Learn From

# Types of Emergencies

# Three Types of Emergencies

1. Routine emergencies.
2. Crisis emergencies.
3. Emergent crises.

# Routine Emergencies

- "Routine" does not mean "easy."
- "Routine" refers to the relative predictability of the situation.
  - Of a "general nature" that permits advanced preparation.
- Able to take advantage of lessons learned from prior experience.
- Likely to have thought about:
  - What we need to plan for.
  - What is needed (equipment, etc.).
  - Have done training and exercises.



# Crisis Emergencies

- Distinguished by significant elements of **novelty**:
  - Threats never encountered before.
  - A familiar event occurring at unprecedented speed.
  - A confluence of forces, which, while not new, in combination pose unique challenges.
- Because of the novelty, plans and behaviors that may work well in "routine" situations are frequently grossly inadequate or even counterproductive.



# Crisis Emergencies Require Different Capabilities

1. Diagnose the elements of the novelty.
2. Improvise response measures adequate to cope with the unanticipated aspects of the emergency.
  - Born of necessity, these may be actions quite different than ever done before.

The response must be **creative** and extremely **adaptable** to execute improvised solutions.

# Emergent Crises

- Pose special challenges in terms of recognizing novelty because they look much like "routine emergencies" in their early stages.
  - Only **later** do they reveal their unusual characteristics.
- Leaders may be slow to see the new features that require a different response. They become "wed" to their original solution.





# Seven Essential Skills

# Seven Essential Skills



# Situational Awareness

- Begin by gathering and assembling the key facts, often under conditions of great confusion and uncertainty.
  - Assess how we are positioned to deal with the emergency.
- Obtain from multiple sources.



# Situational Awareness

- Decision-makers must:
  - “Project forward” the *implications* of the information they acquire and
  - *Anticipate* possible consequences of a fast-changing and still-moving incident.
- You must now:
  - Generate possible alternative courses of action **and**
  - Assess which of them holds the most promise of dealing with the situation.



# Improvise

- Using new-found situational awareness, review routine plans and checklists, then determine if customization is required.
  - The presence of significant novelty calls into question whether routine plans will work.
  - The situation may require unplanned and unrehearsed actions.



# Improvise

- In a true crisis, leaders, often under extreme pressure with high stakes and compressed timelines, must formulate a new approach and then execute new responses or a combination of responses.
  - In other words, leaders must improvise.



# Creativity and Adaptability

- Leaders must find ways to see and appreciate the novel elements in a crisis. Ways to foster creativity and adaptability include:
  - Focus attention on the novelties – what about it is new?
    - People are drawn to the familiar. Don't just ask "What is the same?" ask "What is different?"
  - Ensure that diverse viewpoints are heard. Have a mixed team with a variety of backgrounds and experiences.
  - Systematically require additional thought. Is the set of possibilities large enough at the beginning? Look for one or more best alternative explanations. Use a "Team B" approach.
  - Set operational expectations and track results against those.

# Creativity = Flexibility

- A leader/team must adapt rapidly.
- By its nature, a crisis changes quickly.
  - The first response will likely not be the final response.
- In crisis situations, the leader cannot be wedded to a single strategy.
  - They must continue to take in new information, listen carefully, and consult with frontline experts who know what's happening.





# Decisiveness

- Once situational awareness has been reviewed,  
AND
- The response has been improvised,  
AND
- Creativity and adaptability have been exercised,  
THEN
- **Make a decision.** Decisive action is required.
  - If after a while it becomes apparent the wrong decision was made, make another one.
  - Keep moving forward.



# Decisiveness – This is the Time to Lead!

- When things are happening quickly, no one can have actual control of the situation, but a leader can assume control.
  - In other words, *the disaster can't be controlled, but the response can be.*
  - Assume the mantle of leadership and, well, lead!



# Action

- At this point it's time enact the plans and observe the response.
- Ensure that there are sufficient feedback loops to assess response to the new plan and adjust accordingly.
- A word of warning: Be aware of the dangers of cognitive bias.



# Cognitive Bias

- "Cognitive bias": Systematic deviations from rational thinking or good judgment. Some cognitive biases that appear in crisis situations include:
  - **Know-It-All.** Overweighing one's experience. ("Been there, done that.")
  - **Illusion of experience.** A tendency for individuals to think that they have more experience than they actually do.
  - **Overconfidence.** In one's abilities and in one's ability to predict the future. Belief that can control the future.
  - **Failure to observe** or believe disconfirming evidence.
  - **Escalation of commitment.** Once it's noticed that it is not working, people recommit to the solution.
  - **Bandwagon effect.** The tendency to do or believe things because many other people do or believe the same.
  - **Migration of objectives.** Objectives shift and become personal.



# Counteracting Cognitive Bias

- Cognitive biases are a constant influence.
- It is necessary to identify moments when cognitive bias are *"in play,"* then counteract them in real time.
  - Choose different leaders or teams from the groups less likely to be subject to the same bias.
  - Provide training and guidance about cognitive biases and how to avoid them.
  - Develop rules, procedures, and tools that help to counteract them.
    - For example, to counteract overconfidence, have a group of advisors involved in consultation with the leader.

# Communication

- Clear, crisp, concise, and timely communication is essential.
  - Set realistic expectations.
  - Communicate early and often.
- Don't alarm people, but don't be afraid to speak to the magnitude of the situation.
- Remember all forms of communication, including social media.



# Communication

- The communication plan must include:
  - Who the stakeholders are.
  - What the message is.
  - What tools are used for communication.
  - Who communicates with the stakeholders (i.e., who owns the relationship).



# Reevaluate

- Set regular intervals to reevaluate and reassess progress.
  - This allows the ability to tweak (or do a major overhaul of) the plan.
- Ask these questions over and over (this is where "Team B" needs to chime in):
  - "How are we doing?"
  - "What are we missing?"
- Check for cognitive bias.
- Measure performance.
- Recommit or redesign.
- Keep moving forward.



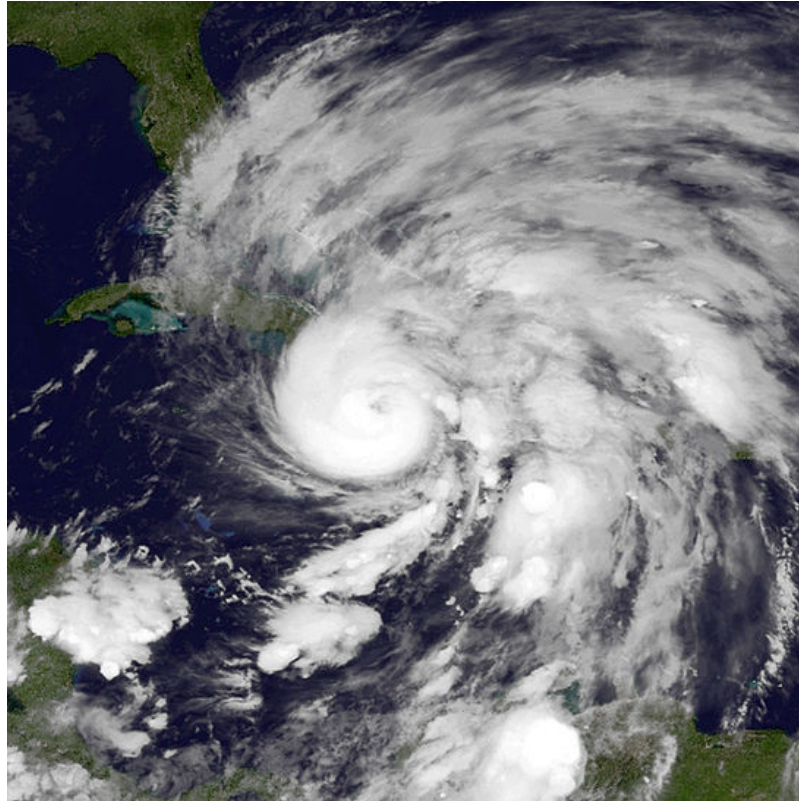


# Looking Back...Events We Can Learn From

□

# Hurricane Sandy

# The Early Sandy



- The storm formed on October 22 and began her June through the Caribbean islands:
  - Haiti
  - Dominican Republic
  - Cuba
  - Bahamas
  - Jamaica

# East Coast Begins to Pay Attention



- By October 25, all eyes were looking south at Sandy; the speculation and hedging began:
  - Different landfall models were circulating.
  - Widespread disbelief and discounting: "Would this be like Hurricane Irene?"



▫ October 28, 2012

**90% chance** that Sandy would hit the major population centers in the East *head on*.

# Landfall – October 29, 8:00 PM



- The center of the storm made landfall just south of Atlantic City, N.J., around 8:00 PM.
  - The storm was downgraded from a hurricane to a post-tropical storm right before landfall.



# Final Tracking Path of Hurricane Sandy

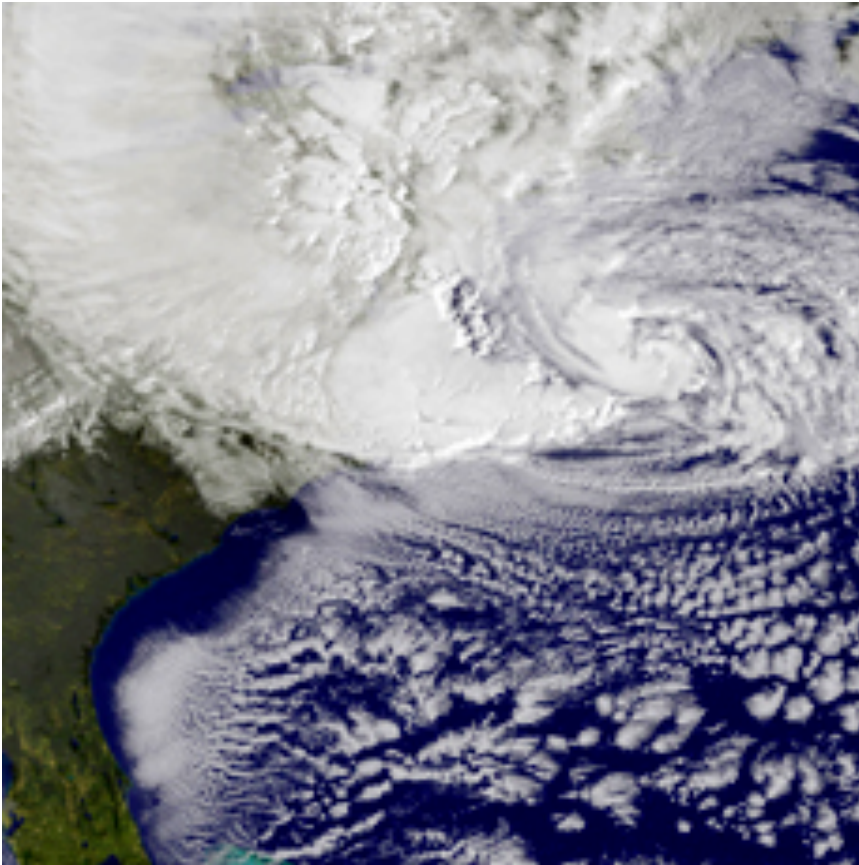
# Sandy Superlatives



- Deadliest and most destructive storm of the 2012 Atlantic hurricane season.
- Second costliest hurricane in United States history. Preliminary estimates assess damage at \$75 billion. (In 2005, Katrina's damage was higher at \$81 billion.)



# Sandy Superlatives



- Sandy is the largest Atlantic hurricane on record as measured by diameter, with winds spanning 1,100 miles from Florida to Canada.
  - A third of the country was impacted by the storm.
- Hurricane Sandy affected 24 states.
  - Thousands of homes and businesses destroyed.
  - Millions without electrical power.

# Sandy Statistics



- At least 285 people were killed along the path of the storm in seven countries.
  - 72 of those deaths were in the United States.

# Sandy Statistics



- On October 29, more than 13,000 flights were canceled across the U.S. On October 30, more than 3,500 were cancelled.
  - Total number of flights cancelled = 19,729.
- Public transportation was halted throughout the region.
- The New York Stock Exchange closed for two days.

# Sandy Statistics

- Four city hospitals were forced to evacuate patients as water poured in and power failed.
  - NYU Langone Medical Center, Bellevue, and the Manhattan VA hospitals – all next door to one another along the East River – and Coney Island Hospital in Brooklyn had to relocate more than 1,200 patients.



# Leadership Successes

- No deaths or serious impacts from the hospital evacuations.
- Minimal deaths in the region.

# Leadership Failures

- Many businesses failed to adequately take the threat seriously.
  - Common thought: "We got ready for Irene and nothing happened!"
  - Downplayed the possibility of a direct hit and serious flooding because a storm of this size "had never happened before."
- Many plans assumed there would be a short time out of the building and then everyone could go back to work.
- Plans assumed minimal impact in the region; they expected power and ISPs to work.
- Work from home and displacing workers never tested!
- Many citizens failed to get ready at home.

# Seven Essential Skills



"If we all did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves."

*-Thomas Edison*



# Thank you

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# Improved Event Response with Crisis Commander

*Put your plans in the hands of your people*

April 27, 2017

# Problems Crisis Commander Helps Solve



## 1. Digitize Your Response Plans

Put your response plan in your employee's pocket

## 2. Improve Operational Response

Communicate, collaborate and share status updates easily while 'on the go'

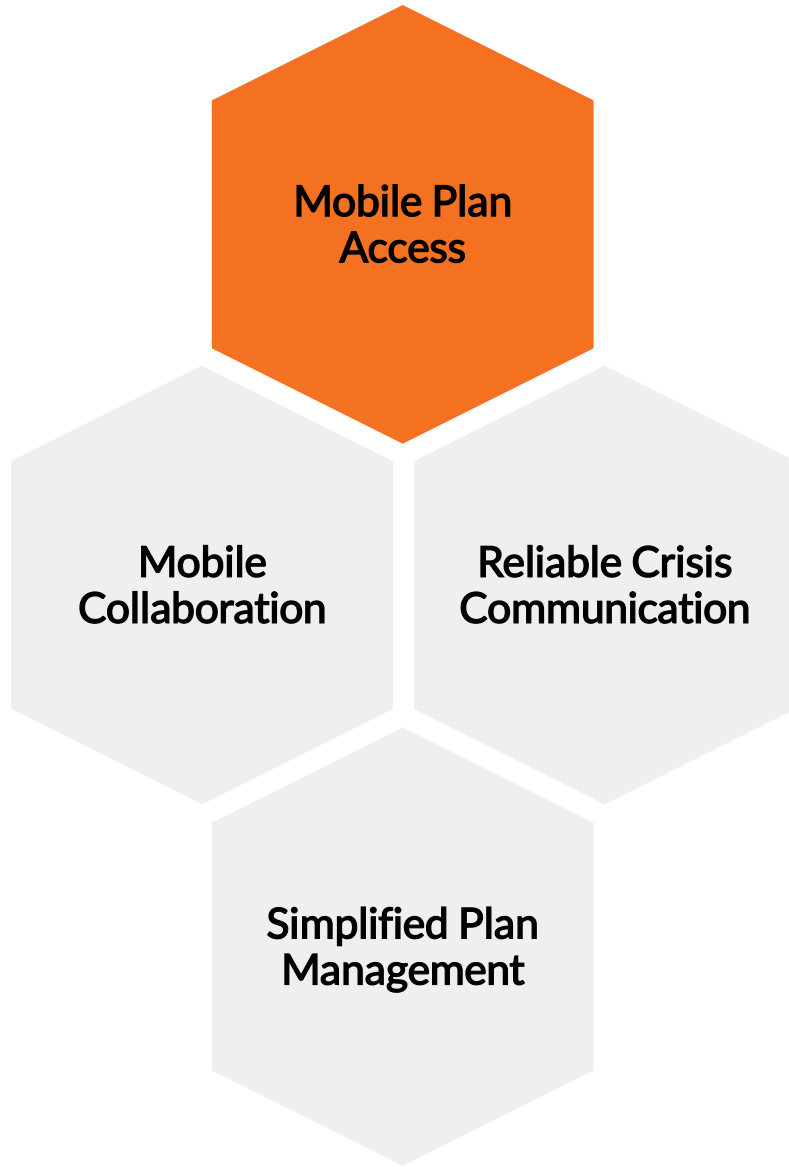
## 3. Keep Everyone Informed

Provide real-time visibility to the response for executive stakeholders

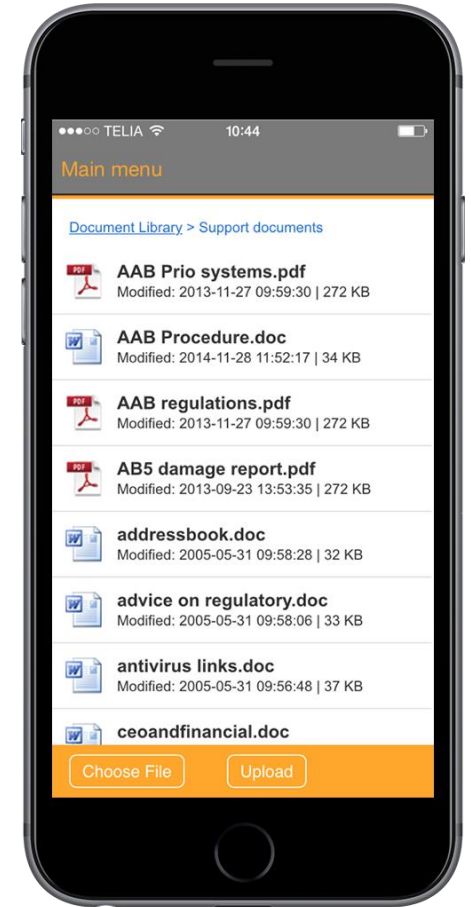
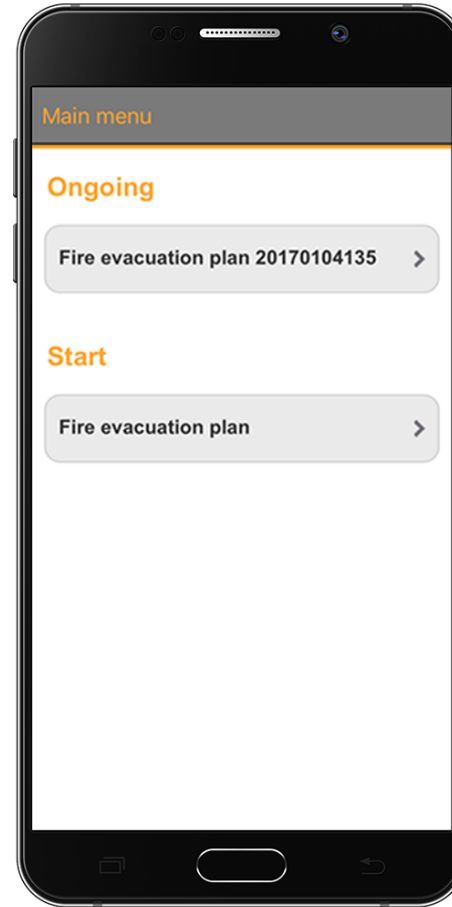
## 4. Standardize Organizational Response

Save time managing and updating plans

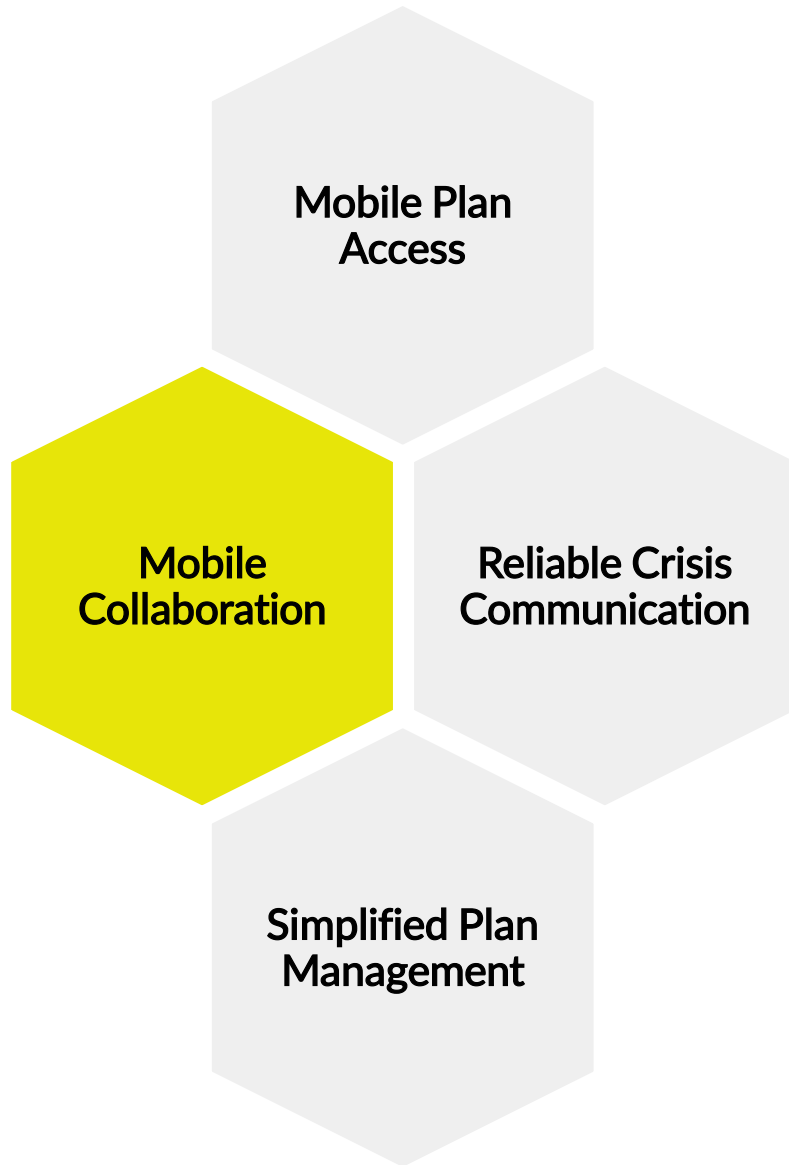
# Crisis Commander



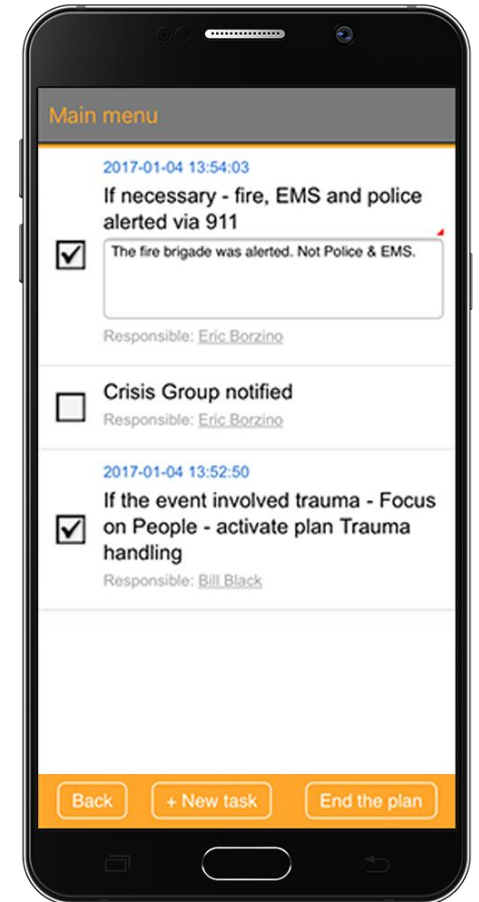
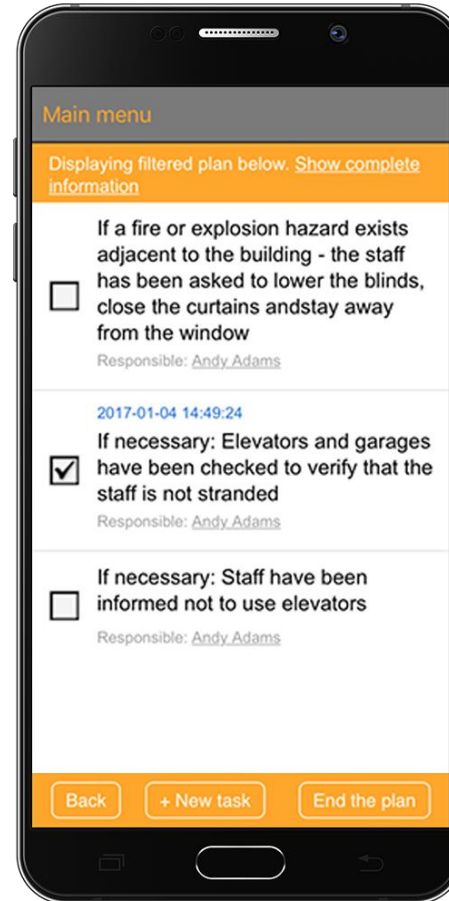
## Digitize Your Response Plan



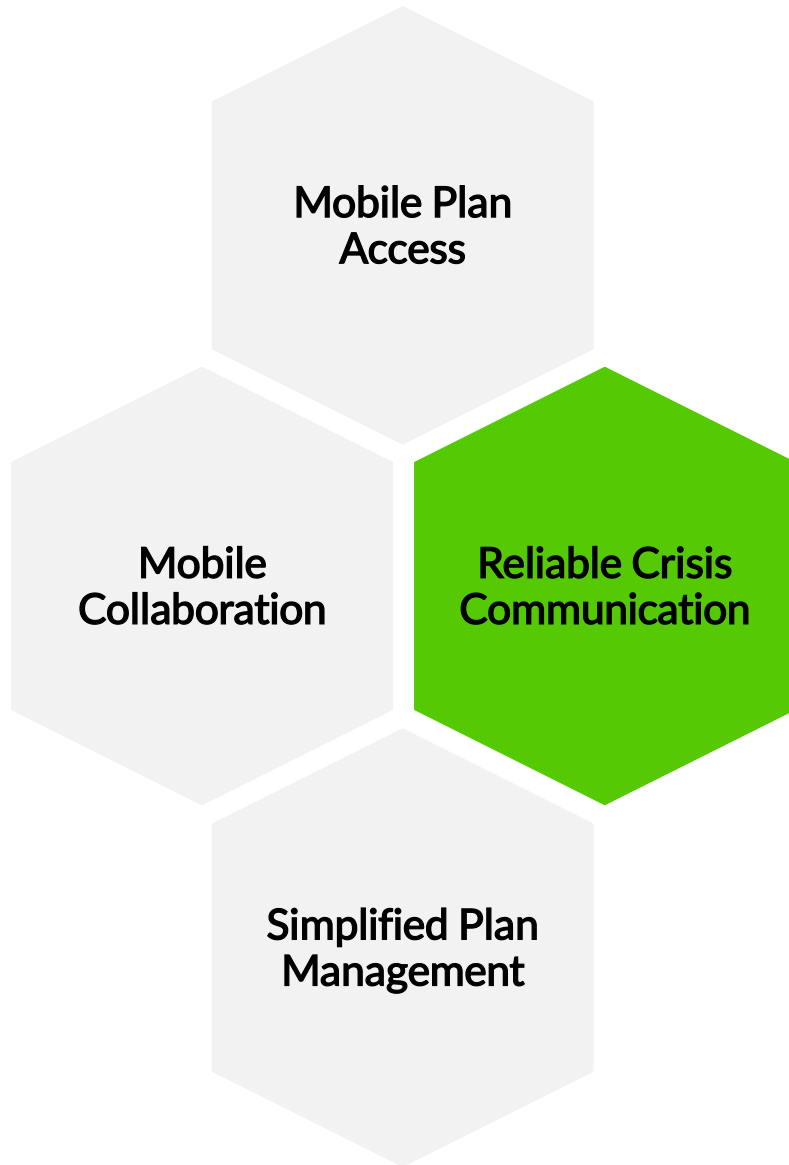
# Crisis Commander



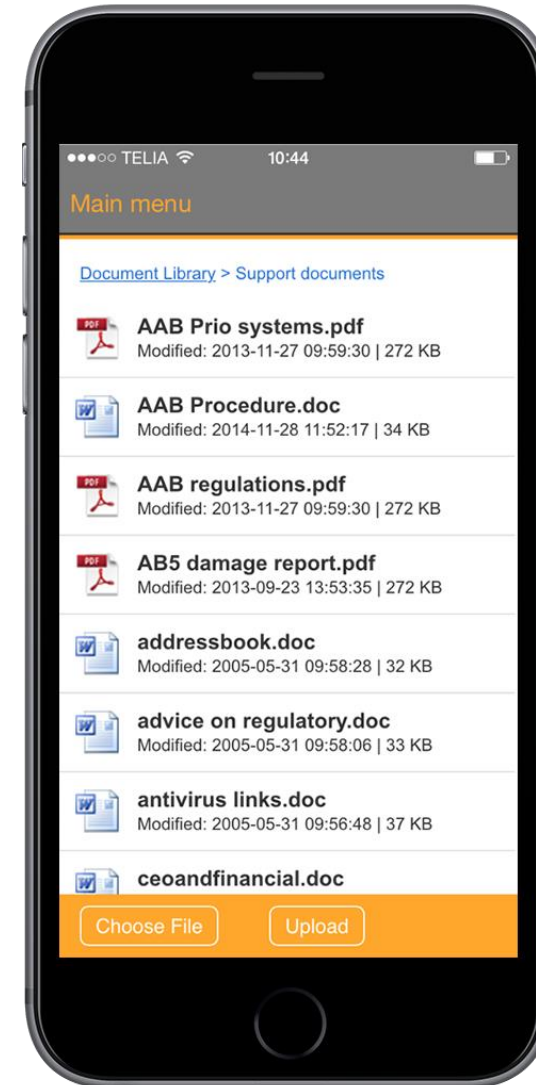
## Improve Operational Response



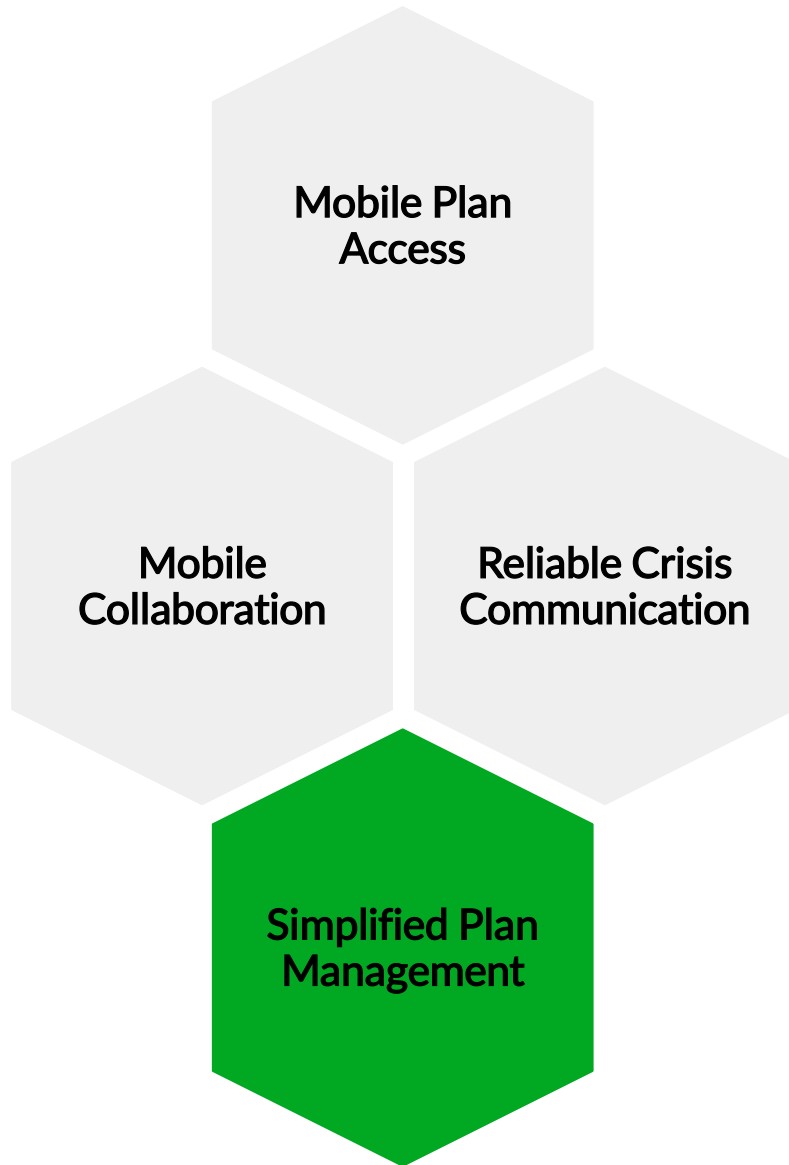
# Crisis Commander



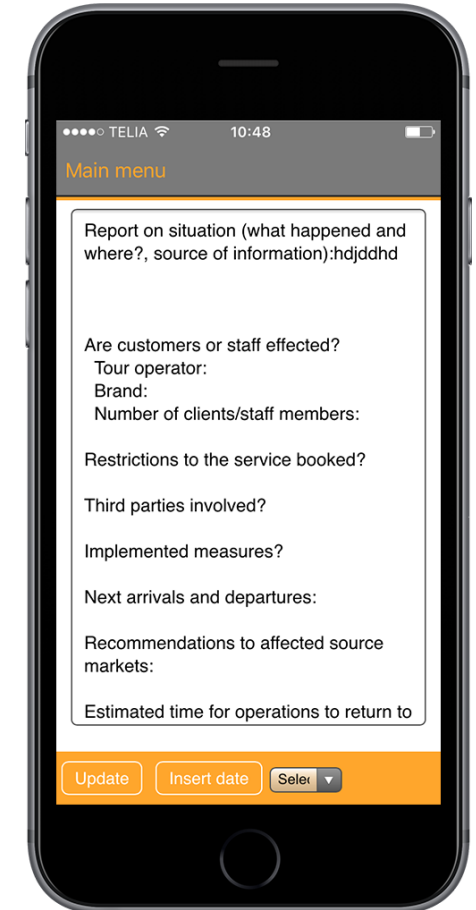
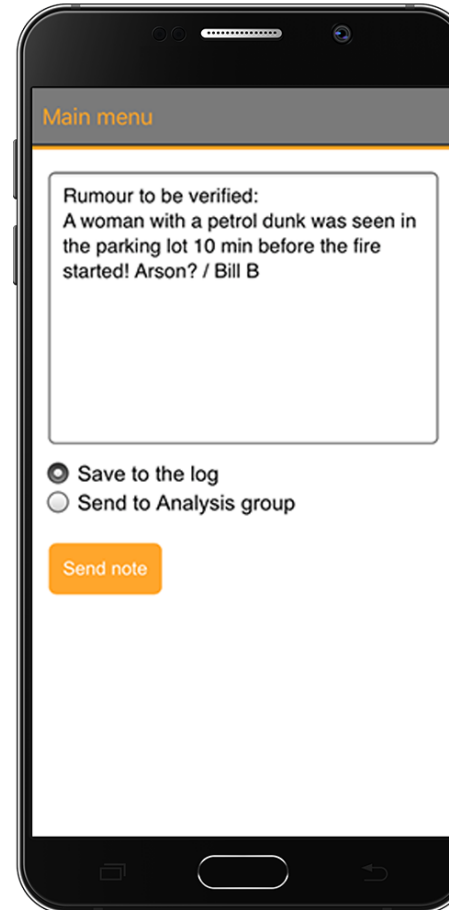
## Reliable Crisis Communication



# Crisis Commander



## Standardize Organizational Response



# Crisis Commander Benefits

1. Easy to Use and Deploy
2. Provides Task and Situation Level Visibility to Management
3. Puts “A Digital BC Plan in Everyone’s Pocket”
4. Saves Time on the Creation and Management of Plans
5. No Software to “Host” or IT team to bug

