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## Leading in a crisis

As engineers, our workplaces are not without risk. While we do as much as we can to prevent accidents, are we prepared for them when they do? Are the principles the same for a domestic accident as a mass casualty situation? In the first few seconds of a crisis, the leader (vocational or volunteer) has two key tasks both of which are reliant on rapid prioritisation; how to save life or prevent further injury, and how to prevent the situation getting worse.

A complex set of thought processes, on the point of information overload, interrupted by panic and concern and made more complex by the fluidity of the incident itself, makes for a challenging situation. The first few minutes of incident control in the mind of the lone leader can be surprisingly similar irrespective of the scale of the incident. Given the inherent physical danger that our environments can bring with them, we as engineers must both prepare for and be able to take the lead when things go wrong.

The engineering leader on occasion may have to make sense out of confusion. The shockwave of inertia can be commonplace; the majority fixed in their steps, unable to take control. Through experience and training, we can learn to slow our minds down. Stop the natural reaction to think of too much at the same time, focus on the critical and begin to control the environment around us. Once through the first few minutes, the engineering leader must have the presence of mind to step back. Quickly considering the bigger picture can save life - could another vehicle collide with us, could someone else in the household enter the room, could there be another attack?

While none of us knows whether we will find ourselves as the first on scene in the aftermath of an accident, none of us should expect ourselves not to be. As engineers we can think logically, prioritise efficiently and fight for solutions. These three traits are perfect for incident control. But our minds must be in the right place to do so. Put thought into what you'll do when the unimaginable happens. I know I do.

Adam Fraser-Hitchen  
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