



## Incident Reporting and Response

“Unless it’s an emergency, don’t bother me after 6:00 p.m. and on weekends.”

By Dan Zahlis

This was Merv Griffin’s contact policy. He retired as a talk show host in 1986. I suspect his name still may be listed in the studio’s incident response plan.

When I was 16 years old, I worked for a boiler repair company. One day, thanks to a mechanic who capped the safety relief valves because they always were leaking, a boilerplate blew past my head and embedded itself in the corrugated steel wall next to me.

The company I worked for at the time had an incident response plan. The plan included the names and responsibilities of key responders, most of whom had long since left the company. The plan focused on earthquakes, bomb threats and potentially violent employees. The plan was a boilerplate document and it failed to address the potential for flying boilerplates. That incident would prove to be a lesson in irony that I wouldn’t appreciate until entering the risk control profession and reviewing more than my share of incident response plans.

Incident response plans are complicated documents that can be extremely difficult to develop and maintain. This complexity leads many companies to rely on outdated and irrelevant boilerplates to satisfy regulatory mandates. I wouldn’t be surprised to learn that the incident response plan used at Merv Griffin’s studio was the same one used by the boiler company where I worked.

William O. Jenkins Jr., former director of Homeland Security and Justice Issues, summarized these difficulties when he provided testimony before California’s Little Hoover Commission. “Assessing, developing, attaining and sustaining needed emergency preparedness, response and recovery capabilities is a difficult

task that requires sustained leadership, the coordinated efforts of many stakeholders from a variety of first responder disciplines, levels of government and nongovernmental entities,” he said. “There is a no ‘silver bullet,’ no easy formula. It is also a task that is never done, but requires continuing commitment and leadership and trade-offs because circumstances change and we will never have the funds to do everything we might like to do.”

**Active Agenda’s Incident Reporting and Response** modules are not a “silver bullet,” but they can help companies assess, develop, record and maintain emergency preparedness, response and recovery capabilities. The modules require an organization to enter a relevant list of situations that pose a risk to the operation. Once a list of situations has been created, the organization can begin prioritizing, developing, recording and maintaining response and recovery capabilities following critical assessments of each situation.

The Hazard Abatement and Incident Reporting modules allow organizations to associate one or more situations with each reported hazard or incident. This data helps an organization to make better assessments of a situation’s likelihood, based on historical experience. Each likelihood is combined with an estimated severity and results in an automatically calculated risk index. The risk index score is used to prioritize incident response planning and development activities (e.g. a boiler repair business should begin with boiler explosions and not earthquakes).

**Active Agenda’s Accountabilities** module adds further power to the effectiveness of emergency preparedness by allowing incumbent persons to assume the roles assigned to prede-

cessors with the click of a mouse.

Using Active Agenda to prepare for incident response and recovery requires an organization to: (1) enter a relevant list of situations, (2) assess the likelihood and severity of the situations to determine priority, (3) assign contact requirements to each situation based on severity triggers, (4) associate response roles and step procedures for each situation, (5) assign people to roles and (6) track and record incident response drills.

### What Gets Measured

The Incident Reporting and Response modules are dependent upon an organization’s ability to create a relevant list of situations that represent risk. Once a list of situations is entered, risk assessments can be performed to measure and prioritize the risk of each. The Hazard (increases likelihood of risk) and Incident (has already happened) Reporting modules track and quantify historical occurrences and display the data so that risk assessors can make quantitative assessments regarding situation likelihoods.

### What Gets Done

The Incident Reporting and Response modules transform static, compliance boilerplates to dynamic, relevant and maintainable emergency preparedness.

### This Month’s Links:

**Demo:** <http://demo.activeagenda.net/list.php?mdl=sit>

**Wiki:** [http://activeagenda.net/documentation/index.php?title=Situations\\_Module](http://activeagenda.net/documentation/index.php?title=Situations_Module)

**Forum:** <http://activeagenda.net/discussions/viewforum.php?f=68> **OH**