Thanks for inviting me to speak to you regarding our chosen profession – law enforcement operations. I know I have a mixed group of law enforcement leaders from around the world. Each of you has the ability to make a huge difference in improving the quality of life for all of the people living and working in your respective communities – and simultaneously protecting our personnel from the various external and internal risks we face today.

I have possibly met some of you in prior presentations, and if that is true you know my focus in life is in the management of risk. There are all sorts of applications of the discipline of risk management. My goal is over the next ninety minutes this to give you some ideas, strategies, tactics and thoughts on what you can do to better protect yourself, your team, your public, your organization, and our noble profession. Let’s get started.

One of the great icons of the 20th Century was Admiral Hyman Rickover. He is known as the father of the U.S. nuclear navy and his efforts have made America (and arguably the world) safer. Born in Warsaw in 1900, Rickover rose to rank of Admiral and directed the development of the U.S. nuclear navy, which has a tremendous safety record. He recognized he was dealing with a highly risky, highly complex issue, and he developed rules for success.

How can these rules help you in your highly complex, highly risky world of law enforcement operations? How did his focus on quality control penetrate the organization so deeply so as to reach to the line employee level in the nuclear navy? Let’s take a look at each of these rules and explore the possibilities.

**Rule 1. You must have a rising standard of quality over time, and well beyond what is required by any minimum standard.**

We have to get better and better at what we do. Our public deserves it. Our personnel deserve it. We must be constantly looking for a better way to do things. Status quo – we have always done it this way – is no longer acceptable.
On an organizational level, there are better ways to get and keep good people. There are better ways to build your policy manual. There are better ways to train your personnel. There are better ways to supervise. There are better ways to discipline errant employees.

On an operational level, we must improve your performance in response times, quality and timeliness of written reports, training, candor in performance evaluations, equipment and vehicle maintenance, physical conditioning, injury rates and anything else that we can measure.

Continuous improvement has got to be part of the way we do business.

Strategic Hint: What is the lost time injury rate in every job description in your organization?

Strategic Hint: When was the last time your personnel were trained and tested on their core critical tasks?

**Rule 2. People running complex systems should be highly capable.**

Successful law enforcement operations require people who know how to think. This is an extremely complex job, and if you hire or promote people who can’t think things through, you are en route to disaster.

For those of you who are the executives here today, if you hire idiots or thugs, they will not disappoint you – they will always be idiots or thugs. In view of the consequences that can occur when things do not go right in your complex, high-risk job – this may end being the cause of a future tragedy.

Every nickel you spend in weeding out losers up front has the potential to save you a million dollars. And I can prove that statement if you want me to.

Strategic Hint: After date of hire, when is the next time you do a background check on your personnel?

Strategic Hint: If I were to audit two years worth of performance evaluations, what would I find?

**Rule 3. Supervisors have to face bad news when it comes, and take problems to a level high enough to fix those problems.**

When you take an honest look at tragedies in any aspect of government – including law enforcement operations, from the lawsuits to the injuries, deaths, embarrassments, internal investigations and even the rare criminal filing against your personnel, so many of them get down to supervisors not behaving like supervisors. The primary mission of a supervisor is systems implementation.
If people are promoted who either can’t or won’t enforce policy, you are en route to tragedy. To be sure, the transition from line employee to supervisor is a difficult one, but the people you choose to be supervisors have to understand what their role is inside your organization.

Not to beat this point to death, but you show me a tragedy in law enforcement operations – including some in the news today – and I will show you the fingerprints of a supervisor not behaving like a supervisor.

Strategic Hint: What is the process you have in place to promote people in your organization?

Strategic Hint: Have you considered bringing back the best of the best to help train new supervisors?

**Rule 4. You must have a healthy respect for the dangers and risks of your particular job.**

Many jobs in your law enforcement operations are high risk in nature, and the consequences for not doing things right can be dramatic. Remember the basic rules of risk management: RPM – Recognize, Prioritize, Mobilize.

You must do a risk assessment on each job in your organization and identify the tasks that have the highest probability of causing you grief. Then you must prioritize these tasks in terms of potential frequency, severity and available time to think prior to acting.

Finally, you must mobilize (act) to address the recognized risks appropriately and prevent consequences.

Strategic Hint: Have you done a risk assessment on each job in your department and have you identified the core critical tasks in that job?

Strategic Hint: Do not limit this assessment to the past history of your organization. There are literally thousands of other organizations and departments that do the same thing you do.

**Rule 5. Training must be constant and rigorous.**

Every day must be a training day! We must focus the training on the tasks in every job description that have the highest probability of causing us grief. These are the High Risk, Low Frequency, Non-Discretionary time events – the core critical tasks. These are present in every job description in your law enforcement operations.
We must assure that all personnel are adequately trained to address the tasks that give them no time to think, and that they understand the value of thinking things through when time allows.

Strategic Hint: Do you have a training program that focuses on core critical tasks?

Strategic Hint: Do you have a process in place to address emerging risks?

**Rule 6. You must have a robust audit process to assure that what you say you are doing you are, in fact, doing.**

Audits and inspections are an important part of your job as a leader in law enforcement operations. We cannot assume that all is going well. We must have control measures in place to assure things are being done right. This is not micro-management – it is called doing your job.

If you do not have the audits (formal and informal) in place, you will not know about problems until they become consequences, and then you are in the domain of lawyers. That is too late for action, as all you can do then is address the consequences.

And if you take the time to study the life of Admiral Rickover, you will quickly learn that he was widely despised in the Navy because of his insistence on using the audit process as a tool to hold people accountable.

Strategic Hint: Do you have audits in place to assure what you say you are doing is, in fact, being done?

Strategic Hint: Do you have audits of the audits to assure that the audit process is being taken seriously?

**Rule 7. The organization and members thereof must have the ability and willingness to learn from mistakes of the past.**

Analysis of past data is the foundation for almost all of risk management. We (law enforcement operations) keep on making the same mistakes over and over again.

As I read the lawsuits, injuries and deaths, organizational embarrassments, internal investigations and even the rare criminal filing against your personnel I know that we can learn so much by studying the mistakes we have made in the past.

Strategic Hint: Do you have a process in place to study the tragedies of similarly situated law enforcement organizations?
In closing, here are the three statements that have guided me through most of my adult life. First is a quotation, albeit paraphrased, from the great risk management guru of the ‘40s, Dr. Archand Zeller:

“The Human does not change. During the period of recorded history, there is little evidence to indicate that man has changed in any major respect. Because the man does not change, the kinds of errors he commits remain constant. The errors that he will make can be predicted from the errors he has made.”

What does this mean? We have not figured out any new ways to screw things up. We are making the same mistakes over and over again. Refineries have not figured out any new ways to blow up. Mines have not figured out new ways to collapse. Ships have figured out no new ways to sink. There are no new ways for bridges to collapse. Restaurants have not figured out any new ways to poison people. Firefighters have figured out no new ways to die.

Airplanes have not figured out any new ways to be involved in accidents. This was demonstrated by Cal Rodgers in 1911 and if you want to read all about it, check out the flight of the Vin Fiz.

Law enforcement organizations (and their personnel) have not figured out any new ways to get in trouble. To be sure, there are variations on a theme, but in reality it is the same stuff over and over again. One of the first websites I visit every day is sponsored by the Cato Institute. Check it out at www.policemisconduct.net and you will quickly see there are no new ways to get in trouble.

The second statement important in my life thus far came from my mentor, professor and friend Chaytor Mason. He was a risk management guru in the ‘70s. Here is a capsulized version of his response when I accused him of being the smartest person who ever lived:

The smartest person in the world is the woman or man who finds the 15th way to hold two pieces of paper together.

My instant response when I first heard this was confusion, but then I figured it out. While there are no new ways to screw things up (Zeller) there are always new ways to fine tune and revisit our existing systems to prevent bad things from happening. We must be looking for new and improved ways of doing this most complex job, and you (as the executives) are the ones who can do that.

Status quo (we have always done it that way – we have never done it that way) does not work anymore. Unfortunately, I see a lot of it in government - including law enforcement operations. There is always a better way of doing business, the 15th way, and we must constantly be looking for it.
And, the third thought…

**PREDICTABLE IS PREVENTABLE!**

Anyhow, it was an honor to address you this morning. I hope you leave with an enhanced vision of the value of risk management.

And I hope our discussion today will give you something you can do when you get back to work to improve your specific law enforcement operations.

And if you ever need anything, please do not hesitate to contact me anytime.

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