
UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

3. CRISIS DECISION MAKING

TOTAL UNIT: 1 hour 30 minutes

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- Φ List the steps in the decision-making model.
 - Φ Apply the steps to making decisions during an emergency.
-

SCOPE

The scope of this unit includes:

- Φ Unit Overview.
 - Φ Decision Making.
 - Φ Small-Group Exercise: Decision Making in an Emergency.
 - Φ Summary and Transition.
-

METHODOLOGY

The instructor will begin with a lecture/discussion that introduces and describes the problem-solving model that will be used in the workshop. Using Handout 3.1, the instructor will walk the students through the model, stressing that:

- Φ Identifying the problem accurately is probably the most difficult step in the process.
- Φ The objectives developed will drive the alternative solutions and, ultimately, the solution selected.
- Φ Implementing the solution may not be easy. There may be repercussions to any solution selected. Consideration must be given to how the solution will be implemented before selecting an alternative.
- Φ Monitoring the success and implications of a solution, once implemented, is an ongoing process that is critical to fine-tuning a course of action.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

METHODOLOGY (Continued)

Next, the students will work in their small groups to apply the problem-solving model to a scenario. Following the exercise, the instructor will facilitate a class discussion of the groups' responses, emphasizing:

- Φ Difficulties the groups had in identifying the problem.
- Φ Issues associated with alternative solutions.
- Φ The implications of the solution selected.
- Φ Strategies for monitoring success.

At the end of the discussion, the instructor will transition to Unit 4 by introducing the concept of ethics as it relates to decision making.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

The materials required to conduct Unit 3 include:

- Φ This Instructor Guide.
 - Φ The Student Manual.
 - Φ Visuals 3.1 through 3.11 (or the workshop PowerPoint disk).
 - Φ Handout 3.1, Problem-Solving Model.
 - Φ An easel pad and markers.
-

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

The equipment required to conduct Unit 3 includes:

- Φ Overhead projector (or computer with display unit).
 - Φ One easel pad and markers for each table group.
-

TIME PLAN

The suggested time plan for this unit is shown below. Note, however, that adjustment may be necessary based on the students' experiences.

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Time</i>
Unit Overview	5 minutes
Decision Making	30 minutes
Small-Group Exercise: Decision Making in an Emergency	50 minutes
Summary and Transition	5 minutes
Total Time:	1 hour 30 minutes

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

3. CRISIS DECISION MAKING

TOTAL UNIT: 1 hour 30 minutes

TOTAL TOPIC:
5 minutes

UNIT OVERVIEW

Visual
3.1



Unit Objectives

- ☞ List the steps in a decision-making model.
- ☞ Apply the steps to making decisions during an emergency.



Visual 3.1

Introduce this unit by explaining that the objectives are to enable the students to:

- Φ List the steps in a decision-making model.
 - Φ Apply the model to making decisions during an emergency.
-

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

TOTAL TOPIC:
30 minutes

DECISION MAKING

Decisions can be as simple as delegating a routine task or as complex as responding to a major crisis. Decision making in a crisis is made more difficult because of stress.



Ask the group:

What impediments to good decision making have you experienced (or observed) during emergencies?

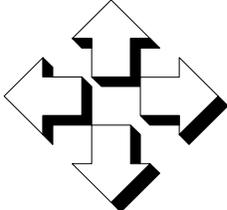
Allow the group time to respond. Then use Visuals 3.2 through 3.5 to review the major impediments to making good decisions.

Visual
3.2



Impediments

- ☞ Time pressure
- ☞ Political pressures
- ☞ High or low blood sugar
- ☞ Caffeine
- ☞ Fatigue
- ☞ Lack of information
- ☞ Conflicting information
- ☞ Uncertainty



Visual 3.2

Impediments to making good decisions under stress include:

- Φ Perceived or real time pressure.
- Φ Possible political pressures.
- Φ High- or low-blood sugar levels as a result of erratic eating patterns.
- Φ Caffeine.
- Φ Sleep deprivation and resulting fatigue.
- Φ Lack of information.
- Φ Conflicting information.
- Φ Uncertainty.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Visual
3.3



Decision Makers under Stress

- ☞ Experience conflict with others
- ☞ Perceive selectively
- ☞ Have poor judgment



Visual 3.3

Under stress, decision makers are more likely to:

- Φ Experience conflict with other key players.
- Φ Perceive selectively because of sensory overload, and thus perhaps miss important information.
- Φ Experience perception distortion and poor judgment.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Visual
3.4



Decision Makers under Stress

- ☞ Less tolerant of ambiguity
- ☞ Decreased ability to handle tasks and think
- ☞ Tendency toward aggression and escape



Visual 3.4

- Φ Be less tolerant of ambiguity and thus perhaps make premature decisions.
- Φ Experience a decreased ability to handle difficult tasks and work productively.
- Φ Experience a greater tendency toward aggression and escape behaviors.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Visual
3.5



Decision Makers under Stress

- ☞ Consider only immediate situation.
- ☞ Choose a risky alternative.
- ☞ Have tunnel vision.
- ☞ Succumb to “group think.”



Visual 3.5

- Φ Consider only immediate survival goals, sacrificing long-range considerations.
- Φ Choose a risky alternative.
- Φ Get tunnel vision.
- Φ Succumb to “group think.”

An important key to effective decision making in a crisis is being systematic. A good way to be systematic is to use a problem-solving model.

The next section will present a problem-solving model that has proven effective in emergency situations.

PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

There are different decision-making/problem-solving models. Each step in this model may be completed quickly, but every step must be considered. It is not necessary to document each step, but it is important to think through every step.



Handout 3.1

Distribute Handout 3.1, Problem-Solving Model at this point.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Step 1: Size up the situation.

Visual
3.6



Problem-Solving Model

Step 1: Size up the situation.

- ☞ What is happening?
- ☞ Who is involved?
- ☞ What are the stakes?

Visual 3.6

Sizing up the situation involves analyzing the current situation to determine:

- Φ What is happening (and not happening).
- Φ Who is involved.
- Φ What the stakes are.

Sizing up means making sure that you have the full picture.

After completing the size-up, you can identify the problem(s) more accurately. **Identifying the problem accurately is probably the most difficult step in problem solving.**

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Step 2: Identify contingencies.

Visual
3.7



Problem-Solving Model

Step 2: Identify contingencies.

Murphy's Laws:

- ☞ Nothing is as easy as it looks.
- ☞ Everything takes longer than you think it will.
- ☞ If anything can go wrong, it will.

Visual 3.7

The next step is to identify all of the contingencies.

Contingencies are what can go wrong—“Murpheys.” Think about all of the things that can get in the way of solving the problem you are facing.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Step 3: Determine objectives.

Visual
3.8



Problem-Solving Model

Step 3: Determine objectives.

Objectives are:

- ☞ Measurable targets.
- ☞ Used to monitor progress and establish priorities.
- ☞ Based on the sizeup and contingencies.

Visual 3.8

Objectives should clearly tell you what you need to do to be successful.

You should develop objectives that allow you to monitor your progress. Your objectives should also help you prioritize how you and your staff spend time and resources.

Remember to use your analysis of the situation and possible contingencies when determining your objectives.

The objectives developed will drive the alternative solutions and, ultimately, the solution selected.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Step 4: Identify needed resources.

Visual
3.9



Problem-Solving Model

Step 4: Identify needed resources.

- ☞ What resources are needed?
- ☞ Where will I get them?
- ☞ How long will it take?
- ☞ What can others offer?
- ☞ Are there any special requirements?

Visual 3.9

Resources include **people**, **information (data)**, and **things** needed to resolve the problem.

Often information is overlooked when people identify their resource needs. Don't forget to include your information needs when identifying resource requirements.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Step 5: Build a plan.

Visual
3.10



Problem-Solving Model

Step 5: Build a plan.

Your plan should state:

- ☞ Who . . .
- ☞ Will do what . . . (and with whom)
- ☞ By when.
- ☞ Where.
- ☞ How.

Visual 3.10

Building a plan is simply stating who will do what by when.

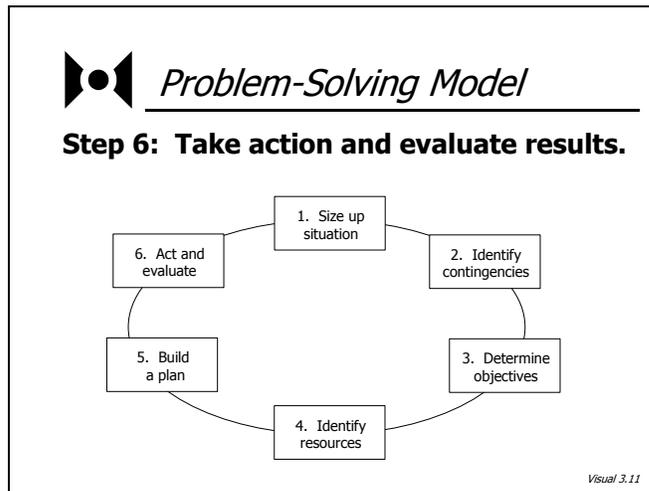
Plans need to be communicated to all parties involved.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

Step 6: Take action and evaluate results.

Visual
3.11



Implementing the solution may not be easy. There may be repercussions to any solution selected. Carefully consider how the solution will be implemented before selecting an alternative. After taking action, it is critical to monitor the progress of the problem.

- Φ Has the situation changed?
- Φ Are more (or fewer) resources required?
- Φ Is a different alternative solution required?

Monitoring the success and results of a solution is an ongoing process that is critical to fine tuning a course of action.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING



Ask the group:

What are some blocks to effective decision making?

Allow the students time to respond, and list their answers on an easel pad. If not mentioned by the students, be sure to mention:

- Φ **Perceptual blocks**—not being able to distinguish relevant from insignificant data.
- Φ **Cultural blocks**—tradition-bound ideas and assumptions.
- Φ **Emotional blocks**—fear of appearing incompetent to ourselves and others.
- Φ **Intellectual blocks**—not understanding technical or specialized information.



Ask the group:

Aside from using a problem-solving model, what else can you do to prevent making poor decisions in a crisis situation?

Allow the students time to respond, and list their answers on an easel pad. If not mentioned by the students, be sure to mention:

- Φ **Know yourself**—your blind spots and when you are shutting out information or differing views.
- Φ **Don't rush decisions** unless there is an extreme emergency.
- Φ **Get input from others**—both those involved in the situation, and those with some distance for perspective.
- Φ **Be flexible** and open to creative alternatives.
- Φ **Don't be afraid** to take initiative and calculated risks when necessary.
- Φ **Ensure you have all the pertinent and most current information.**
- Φ **Consider all the available options.**

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

TOTAL EXERCISE:
50 minutes

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Introduce this exercise by explaining that its objective is to have the students apply the decision-making model to various scenarios.

Instructions: Follow these steps to complete this exercise.

1. Assign the students to small groups. If possible, group the students to match their actual job titles with those of the scenarios.
2. Tell the groups to turn to page 3-12 in their Student Manuals.
3. Assign one scenario to each table group.
4. Explain that group members should take 20 minutes to read their scenario and apply the problem-solving model to identify the problem and potential solutions.
5. Ask each group to select a spokesperson to present the group's responses to the class.
6. When all the groups have finished, ask each group to present its response.
7. Facilitate a class discussion of the groups' responses to their scenario, emphasizing:
 - Φ Difficulties the groups had in identifying the problem.
 - Φ Issues associated with alternative solutions.
 - Φ The implications of the solution selected.
 - Φ Strategies for monitoring success.



Page 3-12

FYI

Instructor's Note: The answers provided with the scenarios are not the only possible answers. The students may present different solutions.

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Scenario #1: Elected Official

Yesterday, a category 3 hurricane hit the beach city of Bayside. Emergency personnel at the bridge into Bayside have called the Mayor's office to report more than 200 angry residents and business owners demanding access to their beachfront property. You are that Mayor. According to city police, the access road is covered with debris and downed power lines, and the area is hazardous.

Use the problem-solving model to:

- Φ *Size up the situation.*
- Φ *Identify contingencies.*
- Φ *Determine objectives.*
- Φ *Identify needed resources.*
- Φ *Build a plan.*
- Φ *Take action and evaluate results.*

The problem is:

Local policy states that no one is allowed access to the beach during a state of emergency, but the citizens are following what the mayor promised. There is an immediate need for more personnel at the bridge.

Contingency: *Residents and business owners may overtake the personnel at the bridge.*

Objective: *Keep residents and business owners from the beach.*

Resources needed: *Additional personnel at bridge.*

Plan: *Address the issue of why residents and business owners can't return to the beach.*

Actions:

- Φ *Media releases.*
- Φ *Meetings with city council and residents and business owners.*

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Scenario #2: Emergency Manager

The town of Middleville received a record 40-inch snowfall 2 days ago. The mayor ordered the snowplows to clear only emergency routes. The Emergency Manager's office had received several complaints about the impassable condition of the roads from doctors, nurses, dialysis patients, and others offering or requiring time-sensitive medical care. The complaints and requests for road work are more than can be accommodated. In addition, several major campaign contributors have demanded that roads be opened to their neighborhoods.

Use the problem-solving model to:

- Φ *Size up the situation.*
- Φ *Identify contingencies.*
- Φ *Determine objectives.*
- Φ *Identify needed resources.*
- Φ *Build a plan.*
- Φ *Take action and evaluate results.*

The problem is:

Snow has not been removed to allow the citizens to travel throughout the town.

Contingencies:

- Φ *More injuries.*
- Φ *Possible lawsuits.*

Objective: *Clear all roads of snow.*

Resources needed: *Equipment and personnel.*

Plan: *After all emergency routes are cleared, start clearing other essential roads.*

Action: *Use mutual aid to obtain the equipment and personnel needed to clear the roads of snow.*

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Scenario #3: Response Personnel

After an ice storm hit the town of Barlow, the power went out in many parts of the community, including the senior citizen complex. With the temperatures dropping and evening approaching, the Emergency Management Director has been faced with the dilemma of evacuating the population of elderly through the ice and cold or finding a temporary means of providing a warm and safe environment in their own building until power can be restored and normalcy returned to the complex.

Use the problem-solving model to:

- Φ *Size up the situation.*
- Φ *Identify contingencies.*
- Φ *Determine objectives.*
- Φ *Identify needed resources.*
- Φ *Build a plan.*
- Φ *Take action and evaluate results.*

The problem is:

Shelters need to be opened.

Contingencies:

- Φ *Victims are causing more problems because there is no place to go.*
- Φ *Pressure from media.*

Objective: *Open the shelters.*

Resources needed: *Already have facilities and staff to open shelters.*

Plan: *Gain the mayor's agreement to open the shelters for the tornado victims.*

Actions:

- Φ *Open shelters as quickly as possible.*
- Φ *Monitor activities at shelters.*

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Scenario #4: Incident Commander

You were the Incident Commander at a recently concluded hostage situation at a school. There were three deaths and 21 injuries during the standoff. The suspects are now in custody. You appointed an Information Officer to handle all media inquiries. You hear over the scanner that the media is reporting all the names and the details of the situation.

Use the problem-solving model to:

- Φ *Size up the situation.*
- Φ *Identify contingencies.*
- Φ *Determine objectives.*
- Φ *Identify needed resources.*
- Φ *Build a plan.*
- Φ *Take action and evaluate results.*

The problem is:

The media are reporting names and details of the hostage situation.

Contingency: *Possible lawsuits resulting from information that the media is giving out.*

Objectives:

- Φ *Replace the Information Officer.*
- Φ *Stop the information flow to media.*

Resources needed: *Personnel to do damage control.*

Plan:

- Φ *Apologize to the families of the victims.*
- Φ *Provide the media only required information.*

Action: *Use press releases to give as much information as possible, but stay within the limits of the law.*

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Scenario #5: ICS Staff

Flooding has inundated the downtown area. A three-block area must be evacuated. As the Operations Section Chief, you assign units to help with the evacuation. As officers are going door to door with the evacuation order, they encounter an elderly woman with several pets who will not leave unless she can take the pets with her.

Use the problem-solving model to:

- Φ *Size up the situation.*
- Φ *Identify contingencies.*
- Φ *Determine objectives.*
- Φ *Identify needed resources.*
- Φ *Build a plan.*
- Φ *Take action and evaluate results.*

The problem is:

The woman will not evacuate voluntarily.

Contingencies:

- Φ *The woman might suffer injuries if not evacuated.*
- Φ *The cats might die.*
- Φ *The media could get the information.*

Objectives:

- Φ *Evacuate the woman.*
- Φ *Find a facility for the cats.*

Resources needed:

- Φ *Animal control personnel.*
- Φ *Cages for cats.*
- Φ *Facility for cats.*

UNIT 3: CRISIS DECISION MAKING

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: DECISION MAKING IN AN EMERGENCY

Plan: *Call animal control and explain the situation.*

Action:

Ask animal control to take the cats to a designated facility as close to the elderly woman as possible.

TOTAL TOPIC:
5 minutes

SUMMARY AND TRANSITION

Ask if anyone has any questions about anything covered in this unit. Remind the group that being systematic by using a problem-solving model can help them make effective decisions under stress.

Transition to Unit 4 by telling the group that good decisions must be not only effective but ethical as well.
