

# CRM for Law Enforcement: An Instructional Perspective

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Crew resource management (CRM) is my favorite course to teach as an aviation educator. The interaction from the participants can take the discussion in many different directions, and it often does. Each participant in the discussion adds value, and his or her level of experience really doesn't aid or hinder the learning process. In most cases, the more diverse the group, the better the participants will interact with each other.

The most important element for success in teaching CRM is the instructor's belief in the concept. If you don't believe in CRM, each and every participant will know it, and you'll lose the group. Presentation is also critical to the success and long-term value of the material.

I always open the discussion by asking, "Does anyone in this class not believe in the concept of CRM?" This is your opportunity to provoke thought and, better yet, gets the students involved. By keeping them involved, you're making the class an active process, a term you may recall from Fundamentals of Instruction, or FOI, classes. An active process means that the participants can't sit on the sidelines and expect to get the most from the experience. They must roll up their sleeves and get in there, willing to engage the instructor.

To teach this extremely important and delicate subject matter, always start with the definition. CRM is defined by the FAA as "the effective use of all available resources: human, hardware and information." CRM is a comprehensive system for applying human factor concepts to improve performance. This system encompasses operational personnel, attitudes and behaviors, training and checking programs, and must become an inseparable part of the overall culture of the organization.

Earlier, I used the term "sensitive" when referring to CRM subject matter. Incorporating CRM into an organization is often driven by the culture fostered by its leadership. The culture of an organization may support or suppress the concept of CRM.

## **SEVEN ELEMENTS OF CRM**

A successful CRM class will consist of a diverse group of operational personnel, including leadership. To support CRM and all that goes with it, such as safety management systems (SMS), the leadership must support and believe in the program, or it will most likely fail.

CRM consists of seven distinct and different elements. The elements are: situational awareness (SA), communication, decision making, workload management, stress management, leadership and synergy.

### **Situational Awareness**

SA is the perception of environmental elements within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning and the projection of their status in the near future. Perception is the first step in achieving SA. This is how an individual perceives the status of relevant elements in the environment. This involves monitoring, detection and recognition of multiple situational elements. These elements include objects, events, people and systems, as they relate to their location and conditions.

Comprehension is the next step in SA formation. It requires integrating this information to understand how it will impact the individual's goals

and objectives. This includes developing a comprehensive picture of the world or of the portion of the world that concerns an individual. Projection is the third and highest level of SA. It involves the ability to project the future actions of the elements in the environment.

Once you have defined SA, the question remains that is central to nearly 80 percent of the human factor-related accidents that aviation faces today. The question is, "how do you obtain and maintain a high and effective level of situational awareness?"

### **Communication**

Miscommunication is the leading cause of human factor-related accidents. We all communicate every day, so why are we having such a problem with this simple task? It comes from a lack of understanding regarding our roles in the communication process. When you communicate, you will fall into one of two roles in the process: advocate or inquirer. When you advocate, your role is to increase another person's SA. This is usually accomplished by stating a fact, such as an altitude callout, prior to reaching a pre-directed altitude. When you are the inquirer, you're attempting to increase your own SA. It is critical to the communication process that you know when to use each particular role. If you inquire when an advocate role is needed, you may create conflict or confusion.

An equally important issue in communication is an understanding of both internal and external barriers to the process. An external barrier is noise, distance or anything else that will inhibit communication. An internal barrier is more daunting. It involves a more personal side of the communication process. This barrier may be driven by prejudice, anger, fear, doubt or even fatigue. No matter which barrier you face, it must be recognized and overcome for the communication process to work.

### **Decision Making**

Some people are decisive by nature; others are not. Making decisions should be part of a process. One such process to aid in decision-making is the Scientific Wheel. It illustrates decision making as a seven-step process:

- 1 Recognition of Need
- 2 Identifying and Defining Need
- 3 Collecting Facts
- 4 Identifying Alternatives
- 5 Weighing the Impact of Alternatives
- 6 Selecting and Implementing  
the Response
- 7 Evaluating the Result

If you don't get the solution the first time, collect more facts and select a different response. Making a quick decision in haste is much different than being trained to make an instant decision. Training is synonymous with conditioning. Through a comprehensive training or conditioning program, you will be able to make better decisions in time critical situations.

### **Stress Management**

Sudden increases in stress are often not as hard to deal with as the long-term issues that we all deal with in daily life. Stress is broken into two categories. Acute stress is stress that comes on quickly and is very intense but often has a goal or solution that when reached, eliminates the

stress producer. Chronic stress is more difficult to manage. This is the stuff that is with you from dawn to dusk and isn't easily removed, even when going to work. Often the producers of chronic stress are marital problems, health and family issues or financial problems. There is no place for this additional stress is the workplace, especially in or around an aircraft. You must learn to compartmentalize the stress and put it on a shelf to be dealt with at a later time and place. If you cannot do this, take the time to discuss the situation with a superior, and remove yourself from a safety sensitive situation.

### **Workload Management**

Being a systems manager in the aircraft is truly the direction of the aviation industry. An increasing amount of equipment is being installed to make our job more effective while reducing our overall workload. Today, we see the aircraft being configured with massive amounts of highly technical equipment. It appears that the seating necessity of the flight crew has become more of a nuisance to the engineers than a requirement.

The key to managing all of this equipment in a crew environment is delegation. This is a critical skill. You must recognize when others around you are being overcome by events or being oversaturated with the current task at hand. More importantly, you must be able to recognize when you are reaching these same thresholds. This leads us to the sixth element of CRM.

### **Leadership**

We often talk about leadership but never truly understand its meaning. Anyone can be a "leader"; the question is, "Why would anyone want to be led by you?" To answer this question, you must understand the traits of a leader.

Leadership traits are often put into four separate buckets: 1) autocratic (my way or else), 2) authoritarian (my way is best), 3) democratic (we'll vote on it), and 4) laissez-faire (it really doesn't matter to me). It is truly important that a leader understand that this is a sliding scale.

There will be a time when each of these leadership traits may provide the correct course of action. Anyone can be a leader, but only one person can be in command. This is designated by the organization and cannot be shared.

### **Synergy**

This word has been thrown around as a feel-good buzzword for too many years. What does it really mean? It is the interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.

In law enforcement aviation, isn't the goal to be a force multiplier? If so, then it is a duty and obligation to make sure that a synergistic relationship with all members of your organization is maintained. This must encompass leadership, dispatch, road patrol and all other entities that may affect an operational decision.

## **APPLYING THE KNOWLEDGE**

Over the past two years, I have had the pleasure of teaching a CRM course at several ALEA safety seminars throughout the U.S. and Canada. At the end of each seminar, many aviation unit instructor pilots have asked questions about the best way to teach CRM. Many have expressed their difficulty developing a CRM program.

It is important to note that the success of any CRM training program ultimately depends on the skills of the people who administer the training and measure its effects. CRM instructors must be skilled in all areas related to the practice and assessment of CRM. These skills comprise an

additional level to those associated with traditional flight instruction and checking.

Gaining proficiency and confidence in CRM instruction, observation and measurement requires special training for instructors in many CRM training processes. Among those processes are role-playing simulations, systematic crew-centered observation, administering scenario-based programs and providing usable feedback to crews. Instructors also require special training in order to calibrate and standardize their own skills. Being familiar with the elements of CRM is not a solution in itself. It is part of a comprehensive safety management system that every organization should develop based on its own culture, mission and requirements.

Instructors should use every available opportunity to emphasize the importance of crew coordination skills. The best results occur when crews examine their own behavior with the assistance of a trained instructor who can point out both positive and negative CRM performance. Whenever highly effective examples of crew coordination are observed, it is vital that these positive behaviors are discussed and reinforced.

Remember, safety is no accident. CRM goes beyond the cockpit. It is up to all of us to implement and support this valuable and life saving tool.

*Author's Note: I have been fortunate throughout my career to be mentored by some of aviation's finest. One such person was Lonney McCann, a fellow employee at FlightSafety International (FSI). Lonney is the lead instructor of the Crew Resource Management and Helicopter Instrument Refresher program at the FSI Sikorsky Learning Center in Palm Beach, FL. I truly believe that this man has forgotten more about helicopters than most of us will ever learn. I spent several years under his careful watch teaching these courses.*