

# SAFETY BULLETIN

Ensure your Team is Prepared!

## Working Through Competing Values

Merriam-Webster defines the word emergency as "a state that calls for immediate action . . . an urgent need for assistance or relief". Emergency Services by its' very name is emergency or speed driven. The words immediate and urgent imply the need for speed.

The competing values of the emergency or speed and the need for a high degree of accuracy in the medical world equates to the demands of a fully involved structure fire. With these factors one has the formula for critical errors. Firefighters are taught patients have a golden hour and that fire doubles every 45 seconds. We are trained that seconds count. Too often we trade speed for accuracy and safety.

The value of accuracy and the value of speed naturally compete. Competing values not only justify taking short cuts - they promote them. In an effort to save seconds we take short cuts that seem logical at the time. It is only after an injury occurs that the policy or the training that was violated by using the short cut is seen as flawed.

High Reliability Organizations have learned to embrace competing values. These organizations refuse to compromise accuracy for speed. They have learned to build in acceptable practices to marry accuracy and speed without compromising a quality outcome. Bestselling author Dr. Joey Faucette addresses this topic in his article "Slow Down to Speed Up". Studies have shown that speed not linked to quality productivity is counterproductive. One of Coach John Wooden's famous sayings was "be quick but don't hurry". High Reliability Organizations embrace uncompromising quality and built in speed that doesn't risk safety.

The business of Emergency Services is one that advocates accuracy and speed. These competing values are the cause of many errors and injuries. Every firefighter needs to be vigilant about identifying short cuts that compromise safety. Emergency responders need to run dual thought processes simultaneously. The question to ask is "At what speed can I perfect this task without compromising safety"?