



Due to the sensitive nature of the incident referred to in this presentation, the slides have been edited from the original and not all of the slides are being made public.
Thank you for your understanding.

DON'T LET A CRISIS SHOCK YOU

MANAGING A LIGHTNING FATALITY AT NOLS



DREW LEEMON

NOLS RISK MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR
HE/HIM



FRANCES MOCK

NOLS LEGAL COUNSEL
SHE/HER



KATIE BAUM METTENBRINK

NOLS ASSC OPERATIONS DIRECTOR
SHE/HER



THE INCIDENT

WRMCG

THE INCIDENT

- On August 2, 2022 a young man, who was a NOLS student, was struck by lightning and died.

The logo for the Wilderness Risk Management Conference (WRM C) is centered on the slide. It features a stylized mountain range silhouette above the letters 'WRM C'. The entire logo is rendered in a light gray color and is enclosed within a thin, light gray rectangular border.

WRM C



CRISIS LEADERSHIP

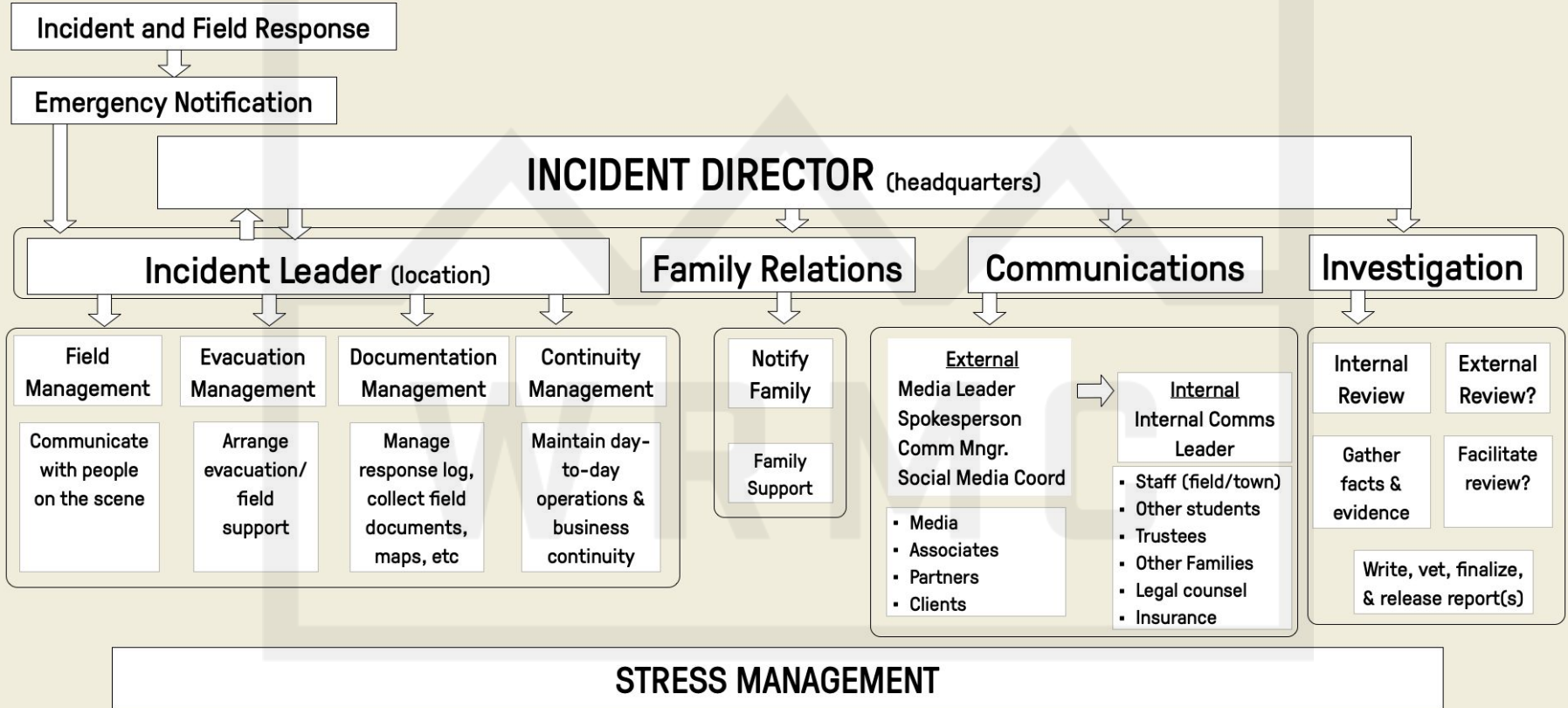
WRM C

CRISIS LEADERSHIP

- Established leadership and assigned critical roles within the first hour
- Hybrid meetings - team gathered in person and via Zoom
- Ultimately, 25 people involved for about two weeks



CRISIS LEADERSHIP





ROLE OF LEGAL COUNSEL

ROLE OF LEGAL COUNSEL

- Mostly an operational response
- Collect witness statements
- Preserve evidence
- Document the scene
- Notify your insurance carrier



ROLE OF LEGAL COUNSEL

- To avoid litigation
 - Treat people well
 - Give information in a timely way
 - Provide support (emotional and logistical)
 - Be compassionate
- Can't base your response on whether you think you will be sued
- Discuss your philosophy ahead of time with the head of your org, your board, etc.





SUPPORT OF THE GROUP

WRMC

SUPPORT OF THE GROUP

- Field fatality protocol and psychological first aid
- Age and group dynamics
- Return schedule and debrief
 - Shower, sleep, connect with loved ones
 - Stress debrief
 - Factual interviews
 - Departure



SUPPORT OF THE GROUP

- Long term support
- 3-3-3 Traumatic Exposure Protocol (Responder Alliance)



3-3-3 EXPOSURE PROTOCOL

3 DAYS
POST INCIDENT

3 WEEKS
POST INCIDENT

3 MONTHS
POST INCIDENT



FAMILY NOTIFICATION AND RELATIONS



FAMILY NOTIFICATION AND RELATIONS

- NOLS President notifies the family
- Plan the message
- Be timely and have some facts and information
- Offer support



COMMUNICATION

WRM C

COMMUNICATION

- Roles: media leader, spokesperson, internal comms, media consultant
 - Incident director and legal counsel reviewed messaging
- Began crafting a summary of known facts and key messages within the first hour
- Identified audiences, needs, and sequence of messaging by midnight
- Next day: board of trustees, families of students on the course, NOLS staff, press release, insurance company, courses in the field and arriving students, other clients and stakeholders, other students' families, accrediting bodies... and others





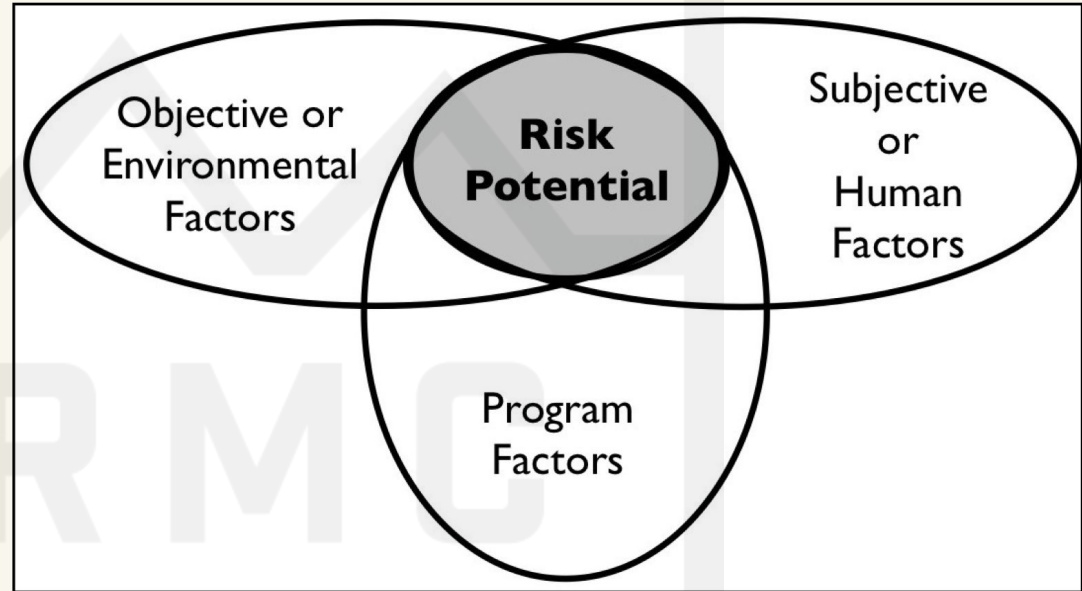
INCIDENT REVIEW

WRM C

INCIDENT REVIEW

Internal Review Report

1. Factual account
2. Analysis
3. Conclusion
4. Recommendations



INCIDENT REVIEW

References

1. Cooper, M.A. et. al. chapter 5, Lightning-Related Injuries and Safety, in Auerbach, P, Wilderness Medicine, seventh edition, Philadelphia, Elsevier (2017)
2. Gookin, J. et.al., Backcountry Lightning Risk Management (brochure with NOAA, National Weather Service, and NOLS) (2013)
3. Gookin, J. (2010) Backcountry Lightning: Risk Management Practices For Minimizing Lightning
4. Injury, Paper submitted for the 21st International Lightning Detection Conference in Orlando, Florida.
5. Gookn, J. Swisher, A. (2015) NOLS Wilderness Educator Notebook, 11th edition, NOLS,
6. Gookin, J. (2014) NOLS Lightning, Stackpole
7. Schimelpfenig, T. (2021) NOLS Wilderness Medicine, Seventh edition, Stackpole



CLOSING

WRM C

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify roles for crisis team in advance.
2. Arrange for professional services (i.e. attorney, media consultant) in advance so they can be contacted on short notice.
3. Understand legal issues and what needs to happen immediately.
4. Practice with your crisis plan regularly.
5. Keep your crisis plan up-to-date, especially as staff turn over.



THANKS



DREW LEEMON

drew_leemon@nols.edu



KATIE BAUM METTENBRINK

kbm@nols.edu



FRANCES MOCK

frances@francesmock.com