



Decision Stability During Incidents: Recognizing Early Signals Before Escalation

Presented by: Rebekah Smith

Presentation Abstract: In complex incident environments, crises rarely appear suddenly. Signals begin to surface earlier inside communication patterns, coordination structures, and decision dynamics long before dashboards or situation reports confirm that conditions have deteriorated. Emergency operations centers and incident command teams often experience subtle shifts in information flow, disagreement patterns, and coordination behavior as pressure rises. This session examines the early signals that appear inside leadership systems under pressure and how they influence decision quality during rapidly evolving incidents.

Participants will explore how communication dynamics, cross-agency coordination, and leadership judgment change as pressure builds, and how recognizing these signals early can help stabilize decision environments before escalation accelerates.

Attendees will leave with a practical lens for detecting early decision instability and improving coordination clarity before operational risk accelerates.

Learning Objectives:

1. Recognize early signals inside communication and coordination patterns that indicate decision environments are becoming unstable during incidents.
2. Identify how information flow, disagreement patterns, and cross-agency dynamics shift as operational pressure increases.
3. Apply practical methods to stabilize leadership decision environments and maintain coordination clarity during rapidly evolving incidents.

Speaker Bio: Rebekah Smith works with leaders responsible for high consequence decisions. Her work examines how judgment, coordination, and communication shift inside complex systems when pressure rises.

Drawing on a systems and physics lens, she studies the early signals that appear inside organizations before escalation becomes visible. Her work helps leaders maintain decision stability, interpret emerging signals, and navigate complex environments where risk, time pressure, and competing priorities converge.

Rebekah is the founder of Unshakable Direction and is known for translating complex operational dynamics into practical insight leaders can apply in real time.