

THE SEVEN COMPONENTS OF NPS OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Operational Leadership is the process of coordinating actions among individuals and team members enabling them to interact effectively while performing tasks, jobs, or projects in support of the National Park Service stewardship mission... Seven critical individual and team skills have been identified which can be employed to reduce the probability of human error. These skills are:

- Effective Leadership
- Error & Accident Causation
- Mission Analysis
- Managing Stress & Performance
- Situational Awareness
- Decision-Making
- Communications & Assertiveness

Leadership: Directing and guiding the activities of other team members, stimulating personnel to work together as a team, and providing feedback to team members regarding their performance.

Human Error & Accident Causation: Understanding the root cause of human error and the responsibility each of us has in preventing it.

Mission Analysis: Making long-term and contingency plans, and organizing, allocating, and monitoring team resources.

Stress & Performance (Adaptability & Flexibility): Altering a course of action to meet changing demands, maintaining constructive behavior under pressure, and working effectively with other team members.

Situational Awareness: Knowing at all times what is happening to the team, the work group, and the mission.

Decision Making: Applying logical and sound judgment based on the information available.

Communication & Assertiveness: Clearly and accurately sending and acknowledging information, instructions, and commands; and providing useful feedback while actively participating, stating, and maintaining a position until convinced by the facts, not the experience, authority, or personality of another, that your position is not the best.

In a sense, the focus of an NPS Operational Leadership course is to facilitate discussion and learning on these seven operational leadership principles. In essence, while you may practice and demonstrate these principles at training, the course is simply imparting knowledge. Knowledge becomes a skill when you put it into practice.

As early as 2004, National Park Service rangers began searching for programs/mechanisms to address behaviors that were associated with the serious injury and death of our employees engaged in law enforcement and emergency response. Repeated attempts over the history of the Service to improve the safety and health of our employees were not proven effective in addressing the fundamental reason employees are injured – unsafe behavior and practices. Only one program was found to uniquely address behavior. “Team Coordination Training” (the U.S. Coast Guard version of Operational Risk Management) was evaluated and selected as the best mechanism for NPS adaption of risk management principles and tools for the field. While other military ORM versions existed i.e. USAF, and were familiar to the ranger workforce, the USCG version provided a curriculum, a system of chapters built upon one another, and tools most closely identified to the National Park Service and best suited for NPS application.