

## School House Preparedness

### Emergency Preparedness of Your Community Schools is a Partnership

by Robert Laford

An emergency that involves children is one that raises the stress level of any emergency responder. But imagine that the emergency was at one of the schools within your response district. The parents, the administration, teachers, and staff from the school, the media, and the general public are all going to be wound tight expecting quick and efficient response from your organization. Are you prepared?

As with any emergency response, those that go the best are led by pre-planning. An emergency at a school that involves one or dozens of students is no different. That pre-planning should involve the school staff themselves. They are the ones that deal with the children, the parents, and the facilities on a daily basis. And they are also the ones that can help plan for the proper response in dealing with those factions during an emergency.

There are certain parameters within an emergency response plan that staff from the school can be used very efficiently and effectively. Even in those instances where their direct involvement in the operation is not needed, their professional understanding of your response plan will help the incident progress smoothly.

#### THE SCHOOL'S PLAN

There are certain tasks that may need to be carried out during an M.C.I. or other emergency that involves outside agencies responding to your local schools. These functions would best be carried out if planned for before the incident arises.

- **Student and Staff Accountability.** The Incident Commander has definite

needs in regards to the number and severity of those injured and needing care. He also needs to be assured that those not involved with the incident are all accounted for, without being directly involved with the accounting for non-injured students and staff.

- **Informational Telephone Tree.** One means to keep worried parents and traffic from the emergency scene is to keep them informed. One way may be to use off-site telephones to operate a pre-planned telephone tree to disseminate information to parents.

- **Evacuation Plan.** Most schools already have an evacuation plan. A plan that is practiced throughout the school year under local and state fire codes.

Depending on the nature of the emergency incident, that plan, which evacuates the students and staff onto the school grounds, may prove inadequate or dangerous to those involved. By planning a secondary evacuation plan, students and staff should be able to quickly evacuate not only the school but also the school grounds.

- **Transportation Plan.** Each school has a transportation plan that they use each day. Students are grouped according to bus routes and loaded onto the specific bus for that route.

The school's M.C.I. plan should include a secondary transportation plan. As with the evacuation plan, the nature of the emergency and the routes of the emergency vehicles may prohibit the use of the primary transportation plan that is

*Continued on Page 18*

Robert Laford is Campus Safety Officer with Environmental Health and Safety at the University of Massachusetts. He is also a fifteen-year fire service veteran serving with the Petersham Fire Department and as an instructor with the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy.

normally used on a daily basis. By having a secondary plan in place for an emergency, non-injured students who were evacuated or are being evacuated can be easily moved by foot to a pre-designated point.

This point could then serve as a pick up point for the buses. This would alleviate some of the parking and access problems that may be encountered at the school where the incident is happening.

• **Resource Allocation List.** In emergency response pre-plan, a section of the document is dedicated to resource allocation. Where the local emergency response agencies may find additional ambulances, personnel, equipment, etc.

The school's contingency plan for a multiple casualty incident should also include where certain resources may be obtained – or how they may be utilized for each of the community's elementary schools. Such resources may include:

- Area to be used as a Command Post. [both inside and outside the building(s)]
- Space to house the non-affected student body in one unit. [both on the school grounds and off the school grounds]
- Quick access plan for obtaining buses for evacuation
- Access to multiple telephones for the Command Post. [both inside buildings and outside buildings]
- Access to cellular telephones
- Student and Staff Attendance Lists [accurate for that specific day]
- Material Safety Data Sheets and other pertinent data and information regarding the building or specific facility (if appropriate).

### AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE MULTIPLE CASUALTY PLAN

An M.C.I. (mass casualty) plan has areas of the plan that will need the assistance of school personnel and as well as areas of scene management that are strictly under the operational controls of the responding emergency agencies.

A mass or multiple casualty incident is defined as any situation that overwhelms a community's normal resources for providing emergency medical services. Every emergency response agency should work with those agencies it shares resources with to develop a contingency plan to handle the situations that go beyond normal. This plan gives guidelines to the community's emergency management team in regards to the use and allocation of limited emergency resources during an M.C.I.

There are ten (10) critical functions that should take place during any M.C.I. In any pre-plan that deals with multiple casualty incidents these steps should be (1) spelled out and (2) practiced in training and drills. These functions are:

- A situational Size-up or needs assessment to determine if there is a need for fire suppression, protective equipment, extrication, rescue, or other special resources. What is the extent, nature, severity, and spread of the incident?
- Initial notification/communication to notify dispatcher and responder agencies of the location, severity, and spread of the incident; the number of victims; the general type of injuries; the location of the command post and staging area; suggested routes for incoming emergency response vehicles, etc.
- The establishment of a command system, including the delegation of key responsibilities to incoming responders; as well as the designation, as needed, of key areas within the incident. (i.e., command post, treatment area, transportation area, equipment and vehicle staging, etc.)
- The identification of victims with life threatening injuries for whom appropriate medical intervention will be life saving. (This is the first step in triage, but is a continuous evaluation process of the victims involved.)
- The tagging of victims with MED-TAGS to designate and classify victims into four priority groupings.
- The rendering of basic life support care to include only airway manage-

ment, arterial bleeding, and shock.

- The prioritized evacuation of victims from the initial area to the treatment area designated by the Incident Commander or EMS Coordinator.
- Additional prioritized treatment and stabilization of the victims, as personnel and resources will allow.
- The coordination of communications to determine and designate hospital designations for each patient.
- The transportation of prioritized patients from the emergency scene to the pre-designated hospitals.

Two of the ten topics need to be developed in more detail. They are notification and command. Establishing Command over a situation will help work to organize the beginning stages of an incident. By taking an overview of the situation and forwarding the specifics of the scene size up back into dispatch and incoming units, the initial responders on the scene can initiate basic control over the incident that will help it grow in a modular format.

The over-all incident priorities on any emergency scene always begin with Life Safety. Responders must weigh the risk versus benefit of their actions in relation to their own well being, the safety of their fellow responders, and the needs of the patients and the emergency scene.

### NOTIFICATION AND DECLARATION

Upon determining there are more victims than can be handled by normal resources initial responders need to notify their dispatch (as local protocol dictates) of the possibility of an M.C.I. The dispatch system must relay crucial information that is received from the scene to the to obtain adequate assistance needed to mitigate the situation. This information should include:

- Type of incident and the nature of injuries
- Scene Safety: hazards which might interfere with the rescue operations
- Extent of the incident: number of injured patients

- Severity of the incident: number of critical patients
- Geographic area of the incident

A quick size up on (1) What has happened, (2) What could still happen, and (3) What resources may be needed will help the initial units begin to formulate a game plan. It will also allow responding units and the dispatch receive a clearer picture of what is going on and what may be yet to come.

### COMMAND AND CONTROL

A recognized form of an incident management system must be instituted to effectively manage the scene and the responding resources and personnel. A multiple casualty incident, and especially one involving children, can quickly lose control as emotions take over the actions instead of well thought out plans. An organized structure to the incident will allow the resources to be best utilized for the needs at hand.

There are a number of lead positions inside an M.C.I. plan that will help guide an incident of this nature. Although their specific names may change from plan to plan and region to region, the specific functions of the positions are important to help contain control of the situation.

### INCIDENT COMMANDER

- Oversees all scene operations making sure the efforts are as efficient and effective as possible.
- Determines if the scene is safe and remains safe for responders.
- Decides if evacuation is necessary.
- Maintains communication with dispatch services to ensure adequate resources are notified
- Maintains a command staff or is directly responsible for scene safety, media relations, and liaisons to other agencies
- Designates the specific areas to be utilized for the command post, staging area, patient collection and treatment area, etc.
- Coordinates the termination of the incident.

### FIRE COORDINATOR OR COMMANDER

- Reports to the Incident Commander
- Oversees scene safety and is directly responsible for fire suppression, control and prevention; containment of hazardous materials; vehicle stabilization; victim extrication and any other victim rescue needs.
- Is responsible for fire personnel on the emergency scene.

### POLICE COORDINATOR OR COMMANDER

- Reports to the Incident Commander
- Is responsible for keeping routes to and from the scene clear for emergency traffic.
- Oversees traffic management and crowd control; effecting necessary evacuation of local citizens as needed; and is responsible for the investigation of the accident if pertinent.
- Is responsible for scene security including equipment, and personal belongings of victims.
- Is responsible for all police personnel on scene.

### EMS COORDINATOR OR COMMANDER

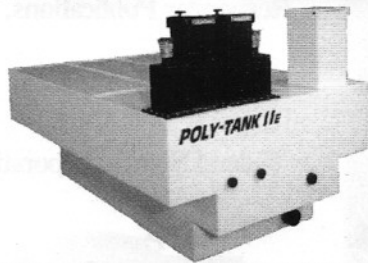
- Reports to the Incident Commander
- Confirms/Communicates number and severity of injured to Incident Commander and dispatch service.
- Coordinates Triage, Tagging, and Patient Collection/Treatment area operations.
- Is responsible for all EMS personnel on scene. (These personnel resources may also be borrowed from the Fire Coordinator as the scene dictates.)

### PRIMARY TRIAGE OFFICER

- Reports to the EMS Coordinator, if in place, or to the Incident Commander if EMS Coordinator is not yet appointed.
- Performs an initial sweep of area to get accurate count of victims and severity.

*Continued on Page 32*

## Why Do 8 out of 10 Fire Truck Manufacturers Who Buy Tanks Choose UPF?



### Here's Why! The POLY-TANK®IIE

- ❖ U.V. stabilized AccTuf™ natural copolymer 100% resin
- ❖ ALL OUT™ Lifetime Warranty
- ❖ 50% lighter than steel - 10% lighter than fiberglass
- ❖ 20% stronger at 70°F, 90% stronger at 0°F than conventional copolymer polypropylene
- ❖ The Industry's Best Design
- ❖ Water foam combination - 20- to 4,000-gallon capacity
- ❖ Maintenance-free design
- ❖ High Velocity Tank Fill Design
- ❖ 3 State-of-the-Art Manufacturing Facilities Nationwide
- ❖ More than 22,000 tanks in service

Call 1-800-638-8265  
 Fax 1-800-966-4520  
[www.unitedplastic.com](http://www.unitedplastic.com)  
**Corporate Offices and Manufacturing Facility**  
 165 Flagship Drive  
 North Andover, MA 01845  
**Other locations:**  
 Ocala, FL - Neenah, WI



POLY-TANK®IIE is the Registered Trademark of UPF, Inc.©1997.  
 ALL-OUT™ is a Trademark of UPF, Inc.  
 AccTuf™ is a Trademark of Amoco Polymers Inc.

## **MEDIA RELATIONS**

*Continued from Page 30*

media themselves, out of a recognition of special public responsibility. It is important that law enforcement, fire and EMS agencies realize that censorship of the media is no solution.

Law enforcement, fire and EMS must resist taking a strict, hard-line approach with the media. The admonition to exercise self-restraint was heard throughout the Vietnam war and during Watergate. If the media had acquiesced to such appeals, the truth would have taken even longer to emerge, if at all.

We do not want government intrusion into freedom of the media because that right is too important. At the same time, the right of a hostage to survive and the right of a society to self-preservation are also important rights, too important to be left to the media.

That is the conflict that has brought the media, law enforcement, fire, EMS and the academic communities together in mutual distrust, admittedly, but in a mutual concern that will help pave the road to reasonable accommodation, if not resolution.

The ultimate goal is to have an on-scene liaison between all responding agencies and the media. A policy of department-wide openness promotes a climate of mutual trust and understanding wherein the police and others and the media can fulfill their respective obligation to the public.

The act of covering a news event changes the character of that event. This leaves the media in a curious and uncomfortable position that of wanting to be observers, but inadvertently or advertently becoming participants as victims or vehicles for the terrorism. The media can play a role in helping to squelch the hostage-taker's platform to reach the public.

Law enforcement and other public safety service organizations can harness these concerns and apply the basic techniques of cooperating with the media, hopefully through planning meetings before the throws of battle when cool heads prevail.

§

## **SCHOOL HOUSE PREPAREDNESS**

*Continued from Page 19*

- If there is a delay in the arrival or availability of an EMT to act as primary triage officer, trained personnel such as coaches, nurses, and first responders may act as the primary triage officer under the direction of the Incident Commander or EMS Coordinator.

### **SECONDARY TRIAGE OFFICER**

- Reports to the EMS Coordinator, if in place, or to the Incident Commander if EMS Coordinator is not yet appointed.
- Performs a detailed triage and medical tagging of victims, to begin a prioritized recovery of the victims.
- Directs the prioritized movement of tagged victims to the patient collection/treatment area.

### **TREATMENT OFFICER OR TRIAGE MASTER**

- Reports to the EMS Coordinator
- Sets up and oversees the patient collection/treatment area, including the prioritized treatment of the patients.
- Responsible for documenting those patients that pass through the collection area.
- Prioritizes patients for transportation working with the Transportation Officer.

### **TRANSPORTATION OFFICER**

- Reports and works directly with the Triage Master or Treatment Officer
- Documents all patients in relation to transportation
- Coordinates patient distribution with hospitals (including communication)

There are several areas where assistance from the school administration and staff would greatly help the successful operation at a school-based multiple casualty incident. These may include a clerk, secondary public information officer, liaison to the school administration, a transportation clerk, and sometimes staff within the triage and treatment areas.

### **CLERK**

One of the biggest liabilities associated with emergency scene management is documentation. If the school could assign a staff person to the command post to act as a clerk to the Incident Commander, this would be of great help.

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER**

During any incident involving school children, as well as involving many emergency response agencies, the media will be on hand expecting information.

The Fire Department, as providing the Incident Commander, would appoint its own department Public Information Officer. The media, however, would also expect statements from the school administration itself. By having a plan that included designated spokesmen from the school administration. This would assist in the positive relations with the media representatives.

### **LIAISON OFFICER**

The Incident Command System Model recognizes the need to interact with ancillary departments. This is to keep an open bridge of communications between the emergency management of the incident and the necessary resources from outside. The liaison position also would assist in keeping the school's administration informed of developments and plans of the command post.

By providing a staff member from the school to fill this position, it may also free up other necessary emergency personnel for different tasks and obligations.

### **TRIAGE AND TREATMENT**

Unlike many commercial establishments that have the potential for a multiple casualty incident, the schools have a number of staff that have training in first aid. These people -- coaches,

## SCHOOL HOUSE PREPAREDNESS

*Continued from page 32*

nursing staff, and any others recognized as trained prior to the incident, could be easily utilized either in primary triage or inside the treatment area.

Their knowledge of first aid, tied with their knowledge of the students and staff would greatly help not only the logistics of rendering first aid; but, also provide emotional support to the injured as a recognizable face amidst crisis.

### TRANSPORTATION CLERK

Where was my child taken!??

By affording the scene transportation officer with clerical help, as each patient is loaded and transported for further care, documentation can be assured. This would free the transportation officer from the actual clerical duties needed to follow the injured patients. He would then be able to focus on the need to prioritize the transportation to those who need it most.

There would also be a need within the Incident Command Organizational Chart for a School Branch. The tasks that the school would need to complete either before or after the arrival of the emergency services would easily fit into the organizational chart. The person directly responsible for these tasks would also report directly to the Incident Commander. Some of these necessary tasks that would fall under this branch of the organizational chart have already been discussed; school personnel accountability, evacuation plan, facilities information, etc.

### CONCLUSION

A contingency plan to help the management of a potential emergency incident will help in its positive mitigation. A plan will also help in litigation after the fact. No plan can give emergency managers all the answers. But a well thought out plan will give direction to the responding agencies.

The morning after an M.C.I. in your community, your staff, townspeople,

and elected officials will be reading about the operation in the local papers and seeing it on the television news. Overreaction on the part of an M.C.I. operation and management is justifiable. Under reaction is inexcusable.

Pre-planning is the key to any effective large-scale emergency operation. Control and communications are focal points to a well run emergency operation, and the lack of pre-planning, command, and control will lead to a crisis-based situation.

§

## NEXT LEVEL NEWS

*Continued from Page 4*

As one first responder put it, chemical/biological threats are becoming the bomb scare of the late 90's." Threat response experts are finding it is necessary to deal with such scares in a different manner. In a bomb scare situation those responding can send in dogs, robots or special tactical teams.

With chem/bio threats the response action requires intense measures and extreme time and expense. Such was the case when approximately 200 people were evacuated from a California shopping mall after an Anthrax threat came in.

Those in the mall were herded into the parking lot and made to disrobe in order to be decontaminated with a bleach solution. Even though the threat turned out to be a hoax, there was an immense cost in time and effort.

Since more than 20 some incidents of this nature have recently occurred, the need for first responders across the country to become adept at determining the actual type and level of threat they are responding to quickly is more and more necessary. The importance of determining whether or not the threat is real is becoming as much a cost saving exercise as it is a savings in time and effort.

The need to determine the appropriate response is becoming ever more clear when one considers the mounting cost to taxpayers in terms of false threats. It is also necessary in order to deter pranksters from getting a thrill from creating chaos.

§

**The Comprehensive  
Guide to Challenging  
Media Interviews**  
by James J. Onder, PhD.  
Denis M. Bramlette  
Contributing Editor

Call for information on how to get  
your copy of this useful guide!  
Responder Magazine 1-800-200-1901

