FDNY Chemical Incident Tactics

by Battalion Chief Joseph W. Pfeifer

Awareness

- Slow down! Early identification of chemical terrorism is crucial. First responders must be aware of the common warning signs and symptoms of a chemical agent release:
 - Most significant will be many people exhibiting similar symptoms, such as clammy skin, pinpointed pupils, coughing, vomiting and/or convulsions.
 - · Mass casualties without obvious trauma.
 - Civilian panic in potential target areas;
 e.g., subways, government or tourist buildings, etc.
 - · Victims reporting an unusual odor.
 - Explosions destroying only the package or device.
 - Dissemination of an unusual spray or an explosion releasing liquids, mists or gases.
 - · Abandoned spray devices.
- If the first responder suspects a Haz-Mat incident, immediately don SCBA and firefighting gear, exit the contaminated area, isolate your unit and notify the IC.

Critical concerns for the Battalion Chief

- · Isolate the contaminated area and deny entry.
- Implement the protective measures of time, distance and shielding.
- · Protect in place vs. evacuation.
- Search for secondary devices at Command Post, Decon and Treatment areas, then in the contamination zone.
- Designate a BC to command the Staging Post early on in the incident.
- Reconnaissance and rescue by the CPC (chemical protective clothing) Units.
- · Initiate gross decon.
- · Coordinate patient care and decon with EMS.
- Contact Haz-Mat directly by cell phone or 800MHz.

Command

- FDNY is the IC at all chemical release acts of terrorism.
- Use the B.C.'s car or FCU as a Command Post.
- FD Sectors:
 - Staging
 - Decon

- Haz-Mat
- Exposures
- Emergency Medical Service branch.
- · Police agencies branch.
- DEP, DOH and other agencies.
- Media coordination and information dissemination.

Communications

- 10-80 Code 2 and Haz-Mat Group--three Engines, two Ladders, two BCs, one DC, Safety BC, SOC BC, Haz-Mat Chief, HMC-1, three HMTUs, one Rescue, two CPC units, Emergency Response Squad, Haz-Tac ambulance, TAC 1 and 2, Decon Unit, Decon Support Unit, FCU and PIO.
- The remaining units with haz-mat capabilities may be special called. Consider calling MSU, High-Rise unit for cylinders.
- Consider a 10-60--one DC, four BCs, three Rescues.
- 800MHz for sectors and OEM.
- · HT Channels
 - · Chief's Command
 - · CPC Units and FFs' Decon Units
 - · Tactical and civilian decon
- PA used to control and inform victims.

Operations

- · Operate uphill and upwind.
- All FFs shall wear the proper level of PPE:
 - Confirm level of PPE with the Haz-Mat Group Supervisor.
- First Ladder Co. investigates without entering the contaminated area; observes how civilians are reacting. If there are signs/symptoms of a chemical attack, dons SCBA and establishes the contamination control line. Informs IC. Controls and isolates civilians.
- First Engine Co. prepares to supply water for decontamination (especially for CPC units).
- · Second Ladder controls access to the site.
- Second Engine assists in water supply or site control.
- Other Units--from the cold zone, directs the ambulatory in the warm zone to CCP (casualty collection point) or operates in exposures.
- · CPC Units--(Level-"A") may need to pair.
 - Officer supervises and keeps track of operation time for those in level-"A"

suits. Ensures FFs' decon is set up.

- First CPC Unit--reconnaissance. Two entry FFs, two back-up FFs, one Decon FF (monitors tactical; officer monitors CPC channel.)
- Additional CPC Units operate in the hot zone to remove the ambulatory, then breathing unconscious. Bring skeds, backboards, stokes and extra cylinders.
- · Haz-Mat--Identification and mitigation.
- · Personnel rotation, decon and rehab.

Decon

- Distinguish between immediate Gross Decon and the full decon through trailers.
- · Control and calm civilians.
- Separate FFs' decon area from civilians' decon,
- · Civilians' decon areas:
 - · Establish a Casualty Collection Point.
 - Separate people who have symptoms from those who do not. Pre-triage.
 - · Full decon and medical triage.
- · Control water run-off.
- · Establish a "post-decon area."
- · Monitor victims and responders.

EMS

- Estimate the number of casualties and resources needed.
- Have the ERS and Haz-Tac ambulances (10 units) MERV respond.
- · Decon, triage, treatment and transport.
- · Alert hospitals.

NYPD

- Secure area and air space and control traffic.
- · Secure the hospitals.
- · Coordinate NYPD in CPC with FDNY--IC.
- Start the crime scene investigation.



About the Author...

Battalion Chief Joseph W. Pfeifer is an 18-year veteran of the FDNY. He holds a Masters degree and is certified as an EMT-D. He assisted in the preparation and coordination of the ICE drill.



HMC-1 F HMTU F S S S S S	Unit Haz-Mat Operations SOC Battalion Safety Battalion Haz-Mat Co. 1 Rescue Co. 5 Squad Co. 1 Squad Co. 18 Squad Co. 41 Squad Co. 61	Division Battalion SOC	Borough Citywide Citywide Citywide Citywide Staten Island Brooklyn Manhatran Broux Brook Brooklyn Queens Queens	Unit Type CPC	Unit Rescue 1 Rescue 2 Rescue 3 Rescue 4 Ladder 1 Ladder 2 Ladder 6 Ladder 10 Ladder 21 Ladder 35 Ladder 80 Ladder 87 Emergency Response Squad	Division SOC SOC SOC SOC I 3 3 1 1 1 8 8 8 EMSC	Battalion 1	Borough Manhattan Brooklyn Bronx Queens Manhattan Manhattan Manhattan Manhattan Manhattan Manhattan StatenIsland Staten Island Citywide	Unit Type HTA DECON DSU	Unit 04-H 11-Z 17-H 15-Z 48-H 35-Z 38-H 46-Z 49-H Decon 1 (Ladder 15) Decon 2 (Bureau of Training) Decon Support Unit	Division EMSC EMSC EMSC EMSC EMSC EMSC EMSC EMSC	Battalion 4 11 17 15 48 35 38 46	Borough Manhattan Manhattan Bronx Brooklyn Brooklyn Brooklyn Queens
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