



First responders master on

First federally approved tactical medicine school trains EMS

BY LAWRENCE HEISKELL

The concept of providing on-scene advanced life support during tactical operations by trained medical professionals has become integrated in today's tactical units nationwide.

Tactical medicine can be defined as both emergency and non-emergency care provided to victims of illness or injury related to law enforcement or military operations, often in a hostile environment. Tactical medicine in the early years was often referred to as Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS); the EMS and pre-hospital community called it Tactical EMS and the U.S. military coined the term Combat Casualty Care.

Many law enforcement agencies now have tactical medical teams composed of on-call physicians and pre-hospital care providers. Since many law-enforcement agencies and branches of the U.S. military have embraced this concept, it is now commonly known as simply tactical medicine.

Just as the tactical environment presents unique challenges to law enforcement officers, the same is true for personnel providing EMS in that environment. Tactical medical care providers must have an understanding of and consideration for law enforcement tactics and mission-specific objectives when planning and providing medical support.

What uniquely sets tactical EMS apart from standard EMS is the ability to render immediate care in an environment that may not be completely secured from threats. When a SWAT team relies on traditional EMS to provide medical care and an operator or civilian is acutely injured during the mission, the EMS unit must wait until either the victim is brought out to a safe zone or for the entire scene to be secured by law enforcement before moving to the patient.

When a tactical medical unit is present, care can generally be rendered to the victim in a timely manner, and when the injuries involve acute airway issues or life-threatening hemorrhage, additional lives may be saved by faster access to medical care.

The primary goal of a tactical medicine unit is to assist the tactical team in accomplishing its mission. This is achieved through team health management, a combination of keeping the tactical team members healthy before, during and after operations.

A full tactical medicine program encompasses the provision of preventative and

acute medical and for some teams even canine support veterinary care. Ready access to such care has a positive effect on agency and team morale.

The International School of Tactical Medicine (ISTM) is based at the Palm Springs Police Training Center, 200 South Civic Drive in Palm Springs, CA. Clients include the U.S. military, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service, Department of Defense contractors, and many local law enforcement, fire department and EMS agencies.

Clients also include many law enforcement agencies from Canada, Europe and around the world.

The faculty of the ISTM consists of both physicians and law-enforcement professionals. All physicians are residency trained - board certified in their specialty, published authors, hold faculty appointments at teaching hospitals and medical schools, and are engaged in full-time practice of medicine.

In addition the physician instructors are tactically trained and sworn law enforcement officers and serve as tactical physicians on SWAT teams.

The law-enforcement faculty component is

composed of experienced police officers that are firearms and tactical instructors, and are active on law enforcement SWAT teams.

The Palm Springs training facility provides unlimited logistical support of all courses in a secure law-enforcement environment with classrooms, range facilities, and unique locations for scenario training.

The arid desert climate and weather of Palm Springs allows the unique opportunity for year around training.

The two-week comprehensive curriculum, uniquely integrates both medical and tactical education; scenario based teaching, hands-on training, firearms instruction and personalized attention.

The faculty at the ISTM believes that peer-review continuing medical education (CME) is important and an essential component of any credible educational and training program. Category 1 CME is available for 21 hours for the basic course and 25 hours for the advanced course through the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP).

California Peace Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) has certified the two-week





scene advanced life support

personnel to render immediate care in unsecured environment

school for 80 hours of Professional Education Units (PEUs) for those students that complete the program. The program consists of two comprehensive and challenging courses developed for law enforcement SWAT team and tactical medical support (fire, EMS) operators.

Students will be taught by uniquely and highly qualified instructors and train with the most technologically advanced equipment, so they become intimately familiar with the most current techniques and tools available.

BASIC TACTICS & MEDICINE (BTM) COURSE: CA-024-RESP, five days, integrates both tactical and medical instruction and covers core content and fundamentals of tactical medicine. It includes lecture, range, and extensive practical exercises.

The basic course integrates tactical and medical instruction and covers the core content and fundamentals of tactical medicine, including basic tactics, firearms, on-scene medical care, forensics, wound ballistics, K-9 emergencies, aero-medical evacuation, clandestine drug lab injuries, and team health management.

ADVANCED TACTICS AND MEDICINE (ATM) COURSE: CA-025-RESP, five days, builds upon the fundamentals developed in the basic course.

The advanced course covers current tactical-medical topics such as biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, radiation injury management, pediatric trauma, blast injuries, environmental injuries, less lethal weapons, trauma anesthesia and advanced airway management and medical assessment and treatment under darkness and low light conditions, as well as advanced tactics and firearms training.

Students may attend this training and use Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funds for tuition and travel expenses, using DHS grant monies to pay for tuition, overtime, meals, lodging, and associated backfill costs.

While the classes are approved for the use of these funds at the federal level, each state's training POC must also approve the use of the funds for officers to attend the school.

Interested agencies and individuals are urged to contact the International School of

Tactical Medicine administrative office early to secure a seat in the school. Historically, classes fill 90 days prior to class dates.

For more information, contact: The ISTM administrative office at (760) 325-2591, or visit the school website at www.tacticalmedicine.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Dr. Lawrence Heiskell is the founder and medical director for the ISTM, the first and only tactical medicine school federally approved by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.*

Dr. Heiskell is residency trained and board certified in emergency medicine and family practice, and is a practicing emergency physician in California.

He has 17 years experience as a reserve police officer and SWAT team physician, beginning with the Kern County Sheriff's Department in Bakersfield. Dr. Heiskell is currently a reserve police officer and a tactical physician with the Palm Springs Police Department.



ALL PHOTOS BY
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