



Cleveland Police Add Paramedics to SWAT Unit

- **Mark Puente**

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CLEVELAND -- Cleveland paramedics will soon be dodging bullets with the police SWAT unit.

The Cleveland Police Department is following a nationwide trend of assigning paramedics to its SWAT team. The four medics selected from the 32 EMS paramedics and firefighter-paramedics who applied could be on the streets by May 1. The first series of tests started Monday.

Across the country, law enforcement agencies have developed similar programs. Two doctors on the Dallas SWAT team are credited with saving the life of a police lieutenant who was shot in the neck during a raid last October.

Being a tactical medic doesn't just mean wearing body armor and waiting for a hostile situation to end. They will join SWAT members in serving high-risk warrants and dealing with hostage situations.

Having medics near the SWAT team could save lives, said Laura Palinkas, assistant director of Public Safety.

The four members will be chosen after agility tests and interviews with SWAT team leaders.

The medics will train with the SWAT team for about two months. They also will attend the International School of Tactical Medicine in California for two weeks.

The city's assistant medical director, Dr. Matthew Evenhouse, from MetroHealth Medical Center, will supervise the medics.

The medics will not carry weapons but will be shown how to use them, said Sgt. Dan Galmarini, a SWAT supervisor.

Paramedic Shanna Stosak, 28, was the only female to apply for the position. She has been employed by the city for one year and is looking for a challenge.

"This is something new and exciting," she said.

Candidates on Monday had to perform physical tests, including pull-ups while wearing a 25-pound vest, climbing a four-foot wall and a six-foot fence and dragging 200 pounds about 40 feet. The final test was a 1.5-mile run under 16 minutes.

One paramedic had to be wheeled out on a stretcher after injuring his knee while climbing the fence.

Fortunately, three paramedics were nearby.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: mpuente@plained.com , 216-999-4141



