

Tactical Emergency Playing a Vital Role in

For anyone who has ever experienced an emergency, time slows down, and it seems an eternity until help arrives. During law enforcement tactical operations when an officer is injured or shot, having the capacity to provide advanced life support on-scene is invaluable and, as many now see it, a liability for the agency that does not have it.

This on-scene medical care is brought about by pre-hospital care providers, mid-level providers (physician assistants) and physicians who serve on police tactical teams. The mid-level providers and physicians have training in advanced surgical and medical procedures far beyond what is normally allowed for traditional EMS personnel. This concept is known as Tactical Emergency Medical Support (TEMS).

The TEMS concept is not new and has been in effect in various forms within numerous SWAT teams throughout the United States for the past 10 years. Although slow to be accepted as a vital and necessary component of a tactical team, the value of having the capability of on-scene medical care for team members is now widely recognized by law enforcement principals nationwide.

Reserve Programs

The manner in which TEMS is utilized and brought into the fold by law enforcement agencies appears to differ widely, especially between the East Coast and the West Coast. This difference stems from the many police and sheriffs' departments' reserve programs found in the Western United States, especially California, Arizona, Nevada, Washington and Oregon.

A reserve program is not always available to TEMS providers, especially on the East Coast. In this case, medical providers are utilized as auxiliary units borrowed from traditional fire departments and EMS agencies. The issues then surface over whether or not to arm the medics, and who incurs the cost and responsibility for training them. Additional concerns include the sharing of liability should such personnel be injured or killed during tactical operations.

Liability and Security

If TEMS providers, once selected, can then be put through a reserve officer training program, they will eventually become sworn reserve officers. This

brings about a comfort zone for the particular agency since their medical component is sworn and now an integral part of their department. This, in turn, reduces the risk of mission security breaches, resolves the issue of arming medical personnel and provides coverage should a tactical medic sustain an injury while on duty. The tactical medical provider's responsibilities have also recently expanded to providing



TEMS students, in RedMan body suits, practice active countermeasures in response to an immediate threat during an HK course.

medical care for *anyone* involved in an incident. This includes suspects, hostages and bystanders caught in the inner perimeter during an operation.

Costs and the Selection Process

Concern often arises about the cost of a TEMS unit for a police SWAT team. Upon analysis, it is quite often realized that the cost is minimal. Since the providers typically volunteer their time, the only real cost is that of training and equipment.

Often, tactical medical support providers are borrowed from one particular agency and utilized for medical support by a different agency. The liability issues and expenses are often resolved via a written "memorandum of understanding."

Selecting mature TEMS providers can be accomplished through interviews, psychological testing and background investigations. Each candidate can be hand-picked by the officers on the team.

International Tactical EMS Association

Established in 1997, the International Tactical

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Medical Support **TEMS:** SWAT Operations

EMS Association was established to maintain an organized network of law enforcement agencies, tactical EMS providers and other interested parties within the tactical and emergency medical communities.

“Tactical EMS should no longer be considered a luxury for tactical teams.

ity while increasing skills and knowledge levels. Cost-effective TEMS training is available and should be afforded to all medical personnel, including pre-hospital care providers and physicians, who should be trained to the highest level possible.

In law enforcement, we all know that “we do as we train” and TEMS training

teach EMTs, paramedics, mid-level providers and physicians the fundamentals of tactical operations in conjunction with the integration and application of emergency medical services. With this body of knowledge and skills, graduates are able to effectively integrate with tactical teams as tactically safe medical providers.



Students learn techniques of on-scene medical care, which might include intubation.



Officer down drills require students to practice rescue techniques and provide cover while under fire.

It’s a necessity,” said James E. Etzin founder and executive director of the ITEMS association.

“The first issue is the increasing morbidity and mortality within the tactical community,” said Etzin, citing several cases of on-scene tactical officer fatalities this past year. Etzin also mentioned concerns involving the killing or wounding of innocents, K-9s, and suspects during tactical operations.

Emphasizing what seems to be an increase in incidents like the Bank of America shoot-out in North Hollywood, Calif., and the Columbine High School tragedy in Littleton, Colo., Etzin said, “These incidents have demonstrated how large an inner perimeter can be, how lengthy a tactical incident can be, and how ineffective the staging of traditional EMS providers on the outer perimeter can be.”

Training Programs

Training for any tactical team involves time and money, but it does decrease liabil-

ity should be as realistic as possible. This training should include, but not be limited to, fitness training, active countermeasures, fundamentals of tactical operations, K-9 emergencies, forensics and evidence preservation, tactical medical care, weapons qualifications and live teaching scenarios, in which students are involved in decision making, field triage, medical assessment and treatment.

TEMS training allows the medical support component to fully understand all aspects of law enforcement tactical operations and the roles and responsibilities of each team member. It also helps them to develop the ability to anticipate and plan for adverse outcomes.

Since 1996, The International Training Division of Heckler & Koch, Inc., in Sterling, Va., has been providing high-quality training for TEMS providers. The *Specialized Tactical Medical Training Program* is dedicated to one fundamental goal: *officer survival*.

The objective of this program is to

As the concept and scope of practice in the area of TEMS has progressed, some case law is beginning to surface, showing that having on-scene tactical medical providers is standard. Failure by a law enforcement agency to conduct tactical operations without having a tactical medical provider on-scene could be construed as gross negligence, resulting in litigation involving millions of dollars.

In today’s world, TEMS providers should be seen not only as a desirable component of a tactical team, but as an essential one. ■

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•See “TEMS”/ p. 24.