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LESSON LEARNED

Mass Casualty Incidents: Coordinating Triage Areas

SUMMARY

During a mass casualty incident (MCI), Incident Command (IC) should be informed of the location of all triage sites.

DESCRIPTION

The fire that destroyed the Station Club in Warwick, Rhode Island on February 20, 2003, resulted in 100 deaths and over 200 injuries. Emergency medical services (EMS) personnel immediately established two triage locations at the incident site. The first triage location was set up on Cowesett Avenue in front of the Station Club. The second was established 100 feet across the street at the Cowesett Inn. Initially, IC and independent triage officers did not know the number and location of these triage areas because inoperable radios prohibited communication among key EMS personnel. Though EMS personnel effectively triaged victims at these sites, the lack of clear communication made it difficult for IC to coordinate efforts between triage areas.

The sheltering of victims in non-triage locations also hindered emergency response efforts. In a few instances, law enforcement personnel used police vehicles to shelter injured victims from the cold weather. However, EMS personnel were initially unaware of the patients' need for medical attention. Consequently, some victims did not receive prompt triage and treatment by EMS personnel.

During an MCI, IC should be informed of the location of all triage sites. Any responders providing shelter to victims outside of formal triage areas should inform IC of the location and status of injured individuals.

CITATION

Titan Systems Corporation. *Rhode Island: The Station Club Fire After-Action Report: State, Local, and Federal Government and the Private Sector*. 13 July 2004.

https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=10806

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