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LESSON LEARNED

Large-Scale Building Collapse: Replacement Protective Gear for Emergency Responders

SUMMARY

When responding to a large-scale building collapse, incident command (IC) and logistics personnel should be aware that the harsh working environment will quickly ruin responders' protective gear. Logistics personnel should ensure that replacement gear is readily available, including clothing, boots, gloves, and knee and elbow pads.

DESCRIPTION

On April 19, 1995, a massive terrorist bomb ripped through the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, collapsing major portions of the structure. The resulting collapse area was a dangerous mesh of wires, debris, piping, furniture, carpet, rebar, and concrete. Such collapse material was extremely abrasive and harsh on responders' protective clothing.

Emergency responders working in the collapse area went through three sets of leather gloves within one shift and a pair of steel-toed boots within two to three shifts. Similarly, clothing and knee and elbow pads were frequently torn and ruined. In addition, rain and burst water pipes quickly soaked responders' clothing and increased the risk of fluid contamination, necessitating that the clothing be replaced often. Logistics personnel worked with nearby Tinker Air Force Base and the Oklahoma City community to acquire large quantities of replacement clothing, boots, gloves, protective padding, and other personal products.

When responding to a large-scale building, IC and logistics officers should recognize that protective gear must be regularly replaced throughout the search and rescue operation. Logistics personnel should coordinate with the military, local community, and others to ensure that replacement gear is readily accessible.

CITATION

- The City of Oklahoma City. *Final Report: Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building Bombing, April 19, 1995*. July 1996. ([LLIS.gov ID# 9849](#))

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