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Emergency Medical Services: Enforcing Accountability during a Mass Casualty Incident

SUMMARY

During a mass casualty incident (MCI), all emergency medical services (EMS) units, public and private, should adhere to a rigorous system of accountability enforced by Incident Command (IC).

DESCRIPTION

The fire that destroyed the Station Club in Warwick, Rhode Island on February 20, 2003 resulted in 100 deaths and over 200 injuries. Approximately 64 public and private EMS units responded to the incident. Private EMS units usually provide non-emergency, inter-facility transportation. However, on the night of the Station Club fire, private units were directed to the staging and transport areas to work with municipal EMS units.

Though EMS accountability was difficult to maintain on the night of the incident, it was accomplished in two ways. First, accountability of on-scene personnel was maintained by IC. An EMS sector was established three hundred feet from the Station Club, which included the staging and triage areas. The liaison to the Incident Command Post and the EMS sector chief accounted for the location of personnel in this sector. Second, accountability for emergency vehicles was maintained through the transport officer. The officer kept track of the destinations of emergency vehicles but did not account for the location of personnel involved in transport.

Though it may be challenging to maintain accountability during an MCI, IC should know the location of on-scene personnel and emergency vehicles. All EMS units, public and private, should adhere to a rigorous system of accountability enforced by IC.

CITATION

- Kennedy, Leo. Cranston, Rhode Island Deputy Chief EMS Director. Correspondence with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*. 26-28 Jul 2005.

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