Note on Limitations:

This presentation is a very brief overview of response to mass shootings and the police/EMS interaction at the scene. It is intended only as a stimulus to proper planning for response to an incident, and is by no means comprehensive.
Mass Shooting

A mass shooting is defined as one or more suspects shooting three or more persons in a single location in one incident.
Spree Shooting

A spree shooting is defined as one or more suspects shooting three or more persons in a single incident in more than one location.
Mass vs. Spree

For the purposes of our discussion, we will just use the term mass shooting to encompass both mass and spree shootings.
Active Shooting / Active Shooter

A mass or spree shooting that is still ongoing when police arrive at the scene
Threat Trends

- While frequency of mass shootings is very low, the threat remains present in all areas, urban and rural.
- Workplaces, schools, sporting events, and any large public gathering is a potential target.
- Motivations vary from revenge to self-aggrandizement to terrorism.
EMS and law enforcement both agree that protection of life is their primary goal.

However, response to an active shooting situation requires a very different response than to the typical shooting scene.

Planning and coordination between EMS & LE is essential to ensure a fast, efficient response.
Pre-Incident Planning

- At the scene of an incident is NOT the time to be figuring out who does what, when, and where
- EMS and LE plans should identify areas of responsibility
- Most importantly, plans are worthless if they are not practiced
Pre-Incident Planning

- EMS and LE need to rehearse response to mass shootings
- How will EMS personnel be identified?
- Do EMS personnel have ballistic vests?
- Where is the line EMS doesn’t cross?
Unified Command

- Fire/EMS is generally ahead of the curve on ICS compared to LE, but we are working on it.
- Unified Command will be extremely important at a spree shooting incident.
- Beside the primary LE and EMS jurisdiction, multiple mutual aid agencies will be responding.
- Don’t forget the incident site’s team if they have security, safety, EMS staff.
Initial Response Phase

- LE generally trains to perform immediate dynamic entry with 2 to 4 officers at an active shooting scene.
- Most agencies will not send additional officers in due to risk of crossfire.
- Next wave of officers will start securing perimeter.
Initial Response Phase

- The primary goal of the entry team is to neutralize the offender(s)
- They will bypass wounded victims
- Immediate life saving for LE is to stop further shooting by offender(s)
**Initial Response Phase**

- Most mass shootings are very short duration (<10 minutes)
- Once LE arrives on scene, suspects generally surrender or commit suicide (sometimes by cop) (~50%)
- Potential exists for hostage situation to develop, though
Initial Response Phase

- During this phase, EMS should stage outside the hot zone.
- Establish triage point for walking wounded and worried well.
- Do you have tactical EMS program to support LE inside the hot zone?
Initial Response Phase

- Information will be very sketchy, and probably wrong
- Unlikely to know how many victims will present
- How many major trauma victims can you support/transport at one time?
Initial Response Phase

- Some LE agencies will start securing “corridors” behind the initial entry team to evacuate victims.
- Will EMS enter this unsecure scene? Will LE bring out non-ambulatory victims?
- How far back is the triage area?
Once the identified offender(s) are neutralized, the scene needs to be secured.

This will generally be done by a tactical team, often with K9 support.

During this phase, as areas are secured, wounded can be removed.
Second Phase

- This is where pre-planning and practice become important
- Where are walking wounded directed? How are they secured (from LE perspective)?
- Who removes the non-ambulatory wounded? LE? EMS with LE protection?
Second Phase

- It is also important to remember the risk of IEDs, both inside the building and outside.
- Sweeping the triage and staging areas must not be forgotten.
- Explosives K9 support is invaluable.
- Don’t forget sniper risk.
Third Phase

- Once wounded are removed, and building(s) searched, the crime scene processing will begin.
- Think typical homicide scene multiplied.
- EMS personnel will need to be interviewed by investigators.
Questions?

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