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15F – BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

EMERGENCY MEDICAL DISPATCHER

EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONDER

EMT

EMT-INTERMEDIATE 85

ADVANCED EMT

PARAMEDIC

While a multitude of biological agents exist that have possibility in weapon use, the Centers for Disease Control categorizes these agents into priority of concern and probable use. Category A agents include organisms that pose a risk to national security due to easy dissemination or person to person transmission, high mortality rates, high impact upon public health, ability to cause public panic and social disruption, and require special action for public health preparedness.

Category A agents and their diseases include:

Bacillus anthracis – Anthrax
Clostridium botulinum toxin – Botulism
Yersinia pestis – Plague
variola major – Smallpox
Francisella tularensis – Tularemia
filoviruses (eg. Ebola, Marburg); arenaviruses (eg. Lassa, Machupo) – Viral hemorrhagic fevers

Of particular concern among these agents is anthrax. While anthrax is a naturally occurring disease among animal skin handlers, the bacteria has already been successfully used in domestic terrorism in the United States. Concern about anthrax prompts responses by public safety agencies, including EMS in some locales, to investigate these concerns and in some cases, acute onset of symptoms, in response to exposure to “suspicious white powder”. The following information serves as one resource in preplanning responses to such substances in efforts to protect EMS and other safety professionals.

Additional resources regarding biologic weapons can primarily be accessed through the Centers for Disease Control at www.bt.cdc.gov/bioterrorism.

PROTOCOL 15F: Biological Weapons, cont.

Suspicious Powder Response Model Procedure – Follow Local HazMat Directives

Definitions:

Isolation Perimeter – The designated crowd control line surrounding the Hazard Control Zones. The isolation perimeter is always the line between the general public and the Cold Zone.

Field Test – A procedure that will be determined by on-scene FD Hazmat and PD personnel to check the presence of radiological, biological, chemical, and volatility (flammability) in or around a package.

ID Test – FD procedure to obtain information to identify a specific substance (i.e., salt, sugar, flour, etc) or chemical compound. Testing to identify a substance is more geared toward dry product or liquids without water content. The test signature of water overrides/masks the graph spikes preventing identification.

Procedures:

The following actions should be taken at incidents involving a package suspicious for anthrax:

1. Once law enforcement (LE) arrives on scene and decides that FD is needed, HazMat resource mobilization should be considered.
2. If the first arriving FD company is not a Hazmat Unit and receives information that the incident may be a potential chemical or biological threat, the OIC should:
    a. Not make entry or attempt to mitigate the incident
    b. Establish an isolation perimeter of at least 100 feet
    c. Should keep all citizens on the outside of the isolation perimeter
    d. Call for the Hazmat Team
    e. Wait upwind until arrival of Hazmat Team
    f. Operate in a support role for the Hazmat Team upon their arrival
3. The Hazardous Materials Team OIC will be either Command or Hazmat Branch as appropriate.

PROTOCOL 15F: Suspicious Power Response Procedure, cont.

Suspicious Package Flowchart

