

TABLETOP EXERCISE MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Use these questions to guide discussion with regard to the following events:

1. What should classroom teachers be doing now?
2. What actions do you take with your students at this time?
3. What is the status of school emergency response teams at this time?
4. Where is your command post at this time?
5. What transition in the incident command system is taking place now? How?
6. What information do you need?
7. What action can you take to get the needed information?
8. What information to provide to the staff, students, parents, etc.?

A Cold Thursday Morning in December

8:10 a.m. The Principal has been notified by the school nurse that several members of the high school chorus have become ill during chorus practice. This is the final rehearsal of the chorus for the Holiday Concert in the Tiger High School auditorium. Initially two members of the chorus began feeling faint. The choral instructor had them escorted from the auditorium to the school nurse's office. Symptoms were headaches, light headed and dizzy, they were sweating and their skin was hot and damp. The school nurse first thought it was the flu or a cold, possibly drug use. One student could not focus or answer routine questions. The nurse has called for an ambulance. A third member of the chorus was just sent to the nurse's office.

[The riser area on the stage is very warm. The spot lights are on and the students are under a shell installed on the stage to improve acoustics for choral concerts. Students are crowded together. The ventilation system is working but the air under the concert shell is stagnant. Many of the students are wearing winter sweaters and clothing appropriate to the cold weather outside. There is considerable stress as the chorus puts the finishing touches on the most important concert of the year.]

8:15 a.m. The first 2 students who were sent to the nurse's office are transported to the hospital. The choral instructor has been monitoring the other members of the chorus. He notices that other students are not feeling well. Three more students are sent from the choral practice to the nurse's office. He decides to take more breaks to get water and get off the hot stage.

8:20 a.m. The SRO tells the choral instructor to evacuate his students from the auditorium but to keep them away from other students. The SRO notifies the county dispatcher of a possible mass casualty situation at the high school. The school goes into a lockdown. The VACS is shut down. The auditorium is sealed off. Inspections are made around the outside of the building and at intakes for the ventilation system.

8:25 a.m. Nine more students are sent to see the nurse, bringing the total thus far to 15. They were complaining of headaches. First responders and local authorities begin to arrive. A triage room is established in the school for the members of the chorus who were feeling sick and requesting medical assistance.

8:30 a.m. 11 outside agencies have responded (County Sheriff's Department, State Highway Patrol, HAZMAT Team, County Emergency Management Director, 2 area Volunteer Fire Companies, 2 area Ambulance Services, County Health Department, Electric and Gas Companies). The County Health Department assumes incident command at this time and is overall in charge. Parents begin arriving as soon as the emergency responders. Some demand their children be released to them.

8:35 a.m. The first media briefing is held by the incident commander and the school superintendent. Updates are scheduled for every 60 minutes.

8:40 a.m. A total of 16 more students from the chorus are complaining similar symptoms, bringing the total number of ill students to 31. They are being transported to two local hospitals as ambulances become available.

8:45 a.m. The County HAZMAT Team is taking air samples immediately with instantaneous results. Nothing is being detected. Air testing continues.

9:00 a.m. The last ten chorus members with symptoms are transported together to the hospital on a school bus.

Conclude the exercise with an After Action Review:

- What did we do well?
- What could we do better next time?
- What changes should we make in our plan?

[This is an actual situation that took place near Medina, New York, December 2004. They had all the kids reunited with their families by 1:15 p.m. on Thursday and the school closed. The emergency responders continued air testing throughout the day and night but never found any unsafe readings. For public relations reasons the school remained closed the following day (Friday) while air testing and an investigation continued. Agencies debriefed at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, then again on the following Monday.]