

PA FIRE POLICE

Fire Police Role In Emergency Assistance

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As our society becomes more and more violent, police officers find themselves confronted with all types of hostilities and behavior that may necessitate calling fire police officers to assist them in dealing with traffic control, crowd control, and other forms of assistance, especially when dealing with hostage situations. Many fire police units have been called to assist police and this trend will, in all likelihood continue as we have seen in recent months.

When confronted with this type of emergency assistance, it is important for the fire police to understand their role when responding to the scene. First, remember you are not a police officer, do only what you are requested.

Things which you must keep in mind when responding to this type of emergency include:

1. You are now responding to a potentially dangerous situation where weapons are most assuredly going to be present and the hostage taker may – no doubt – be threatening to use them against anyone and everyone.

2. Your personal safety must be priority one. It is highly doubtful that the respective police agency requesting your services will place you in a position of danger.

(However, in a hostage situation everyone within rifle range must – necessarily – be extra cautious.)

3. Regular police officers – Swat team members – and negotiators will be at the location and their attention will be devoted to handling the immediate problem.

4. Be prepared for the full onslaught of news media descending on the scene. They will want to get as close as possible to the incident. Check with police – there may be a PIO and a location where news media are to report.

5. Also, spectators will be drawn to the scene for an eyewitness view of the situation.

Their safety is your concern – even if you object.

6. Police and Swat team members will establish two areas:

Inner Perimeter and an Outer Perimeter

Inner Perimeter – is that area where the incident is actually occurring. Only police and Swat team members – for the most part – will be permitted and/or operating in this area. Some police departments may refer to this as the inner corridor.

Outer Perimeter – is where you – no doubt – will be assigned to perform some function.

Traffic Control: Outer

Crowd Control: Perimeter

Access Control: Functions

7. Your responsibility – if assigned to crowd control – will be to secure the outer perimeter and keep spectators at a safe distance. This will be determined by the OIC and you will be so advised.

8. Traffic Control Duties will not vary from normal fire police responsibilities.

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9. Access control may be a part of responsibilities assigned to fire police officers which will include monitoring anyone seeking access to the inner perimeter. If assigned to this activity – the fire police officer should have a pad or paper as well as a writing instrument to record information desired by police agency such as names of those seeking entry, times, etc.

- Conduct yourself in a professional manner during the entire operation – remember, you will be in the public eye, representing your fire company.

- Don't discuss the incident with spectators or news media.

- Refer all questions to the police agency OIC, or whoever has been identified as the spokesperson.

- Don't give the appearance of knowing more than you do.

- Don't argue with spectators, news media personnel, or anyone who may be challenging you or your authority.

- Call for a police officer to deal with the problem.

- This is the one time you will not be honoring the fire police law requiring you to display a badge of authority unless operating in an area completely removed from the danger zone.

10. Regular police officers will be wearing their normal uniforms. Swat team members will be dressed all in black.

Fire police officers responding to emergency situations will be inclined to perform and dress as they normally do.

During a hostage or similar emergency, fire police officers must:

- NOT wear orange or bright colored attire.

- NOT wear clothing which has reflective material attached.

- NOT wear a badge so that it is visible (Shiny objects make good targets)

- NOT strike or use flares unless assigned to a post completely removed from the danger zone.

- NOT use a flashlight unless operating in a zone where the use of such lights is necessary – otherwise they present a real danger to the fire police officer.

- In these situations, you will be operating under the direct control of the police agency in charge of the incident.

- Take your orders only from them.

- Do absolutely nothing more than is requested by the police agency.

- At all times conduct yourself as a professional.