



Odontology Section – 2005

F17 Hazmat and the Forensic Dentist

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The goal of this presentation is to make the forensic dentist aware of the potential dangers of chemical, biological and radiological exposure.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by increasing the desire for more continuing education and training relating to HAZMAT and WMD.

The knowledge required to be a competent forensic odontologist is always evolving. The possible use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) associated with terrorism now requires the inclusion of HAZMAT training to the forensic odontologist. Dentists are secondary responders and must be aware of the dangers that can be present. This presentation will discuss HAZMAT training for the forensic dentist.

First responders arriving at an event must be aware of potential dangers that may not be immediately apparent. What has caused the event needs to be considered prior to entering a scene. If personnel approach the scene without evaluating the incident, they too can become the injured or deceased. The incident will now become bigger and more complicated.

Secondary responders should never go to a site without orders from your incident command section chief. The view of the incident as forensic dentists must now widen. Bodies can become contaminated for many different reasons. An act of terrorism is only one possible means. Chemical accidents can occur at factories or on the highways with trucks colliding or train derailments. Prior to handling the living or the deceased, one must take care that people are decontaminated and safe to handle. If they are not decontaminated experts must know how to handle the remains.

There are many levels of HAZMAT. There is a HAZMAT awareness course. This basic course is sufficient for most dental personnel. Everything you ever wanted to know about HAZMAT, a hazardous scene, and hazardous materials are covered very briefly in this course.

Secondly is a HAZMAT operation. This is the next level for people who wish to have a better understanding of hazardous materials. How to store, transport, and handle hazardous materials are discussed. The different placards and symbols that appear on trucks and railcars are explained in more depth in this course.

Once these two basic courses are completed, there are several advanced courses depending on need.

Continuing up the HAZMAT line, there are different levels of equipment to be worn at different parts of an incident. There are Level A, Level B, and Level C suits. Level C is the lowest protection and level A being the highest.

Level C might be a Tyvek suit with a simple mask and filter. Dental personnel wore this at the Twin Tower landfill.

Level A suit is a self-contained suit. A person is literally sealed into the suit. A Self Contained Breathing Apparatus is part of the equipment. Someone who has reached the level of HAZMAT technician wears this type of suit. To reach this level, training is very intensive and rigorous.

There is also Hazmat Specialist. This is a much more advanced type of training. As the title implies, it is for specialty training.

Level A and Level B suits are almost impossible to perform identification and would be unrealistic in a large-scale event. There is also the question of need. How much training is really necessary? Should everyone take HAZMAT awareness, what about HAZMAT operations? With the knowledge of these dangers, what is one expected to do? Can remains be manipulated in a Tyvek suit? What about level A suit? How much or will decontamination be provided before the remains are expected to be seen.

No advanced training in HAZMAT would be complete without knowledge of the Incident Command System. This is an organizational flow chart that was designed to handle diverse agencies and personnel that arrive at an incident.

In this presentation the author will also give realistic options, opinions and expectations for the forensic odontologist when involved in an incident.

Hazmat, Forensic Odontology, Weapons of Mass Destruction