



DID YOU KNOW it is possible our Brigade volunteers will provide relief services and work in areas that may put them at risk.

DID YOU KNOW?

AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS

As with all patient care services rendered, we must ensure that the environment in which service is being provided is safe. This not only includes freedom from physical hazards such as gas, fire, electrical shock and debris, but must also include an assessment of risk from chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear terrorism. Before going on duty, risk from the above must be assessed and measures taken to protect our volunteers.

Preventative Measures

Health care workers should have up-to-date immunization for tetanus every 10 years. This can be obtained from their family doctor, Brigade Medical Officer, or local community public health clinic.

Consideration should also be given to having vaccination against Hepatitis B. Hepatitis B vaccination consists of a series of three injections over a 6 month period. Blood testing for confirmation of immunity should be done following the initial series and every 5-10 years to ensure immunity still exists. The vaccine is available from any family doctor or can be purchased at a reduced cost from certain Councils and taken to a physician for administration.

Protective Measures

As with assessing the scene prior to rendering patient care services, an assessment must also be made of potential biological hazards and a potentially hazardous atmosphere. Consideration must be given not only to protective clothing, but respiratory protection needs and decontamination strategies after exiting the scene. Consultation should be made with other emergency first responders, law enforcement, and public health officials as to what potential agents may be present and what type of protective clothing and respirators are necessary prior to rendering aid at any given scene.

Suspected Bioterrorism

Brigade volunteers, while rendering service, may notice a cluster of infectious disease or an unusual disease manifestation. These cases must be reported to the senior Brigade officer as well as local public health officials immediately. Many biological agents used in terrorism begin with cold and flu symptoms. Cases of severe, unexplained febrile illness or previously healthy patients presenting with signs of sepsis or respiratory failure should also be reported to local public health officials. A list of common agents used in terrorism with their symptoms has been developed for St. John Ambulance to help recognize these cases. These were posted on the Intranet in December 2001.

Patient Care

Since the spread of certain bioterrorist agents can occur through coughing and/or respiratory droplets, it is very important to ensure Brigade patient care providers follow universal precautions when treating the ill. This includes hand washing prior to and following patient contact, the use of gloves for all patient care, and minimizing the spread of respiratory secretions by having patients turn their head when being examined and covering their nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing.

Additional information on bioterrorism can be obtained from the following web sites: www.bt.cdc.gov and www.hc-sc.gc.ca