

Southampton - Dry Incident - 2009 Debrief

Right then gang. Strap yourselves in, grab a cup of coffee, this is going to be a long one. I'm not entirely sure that it's completely necessary. I really do think that the dry incident was so simple that each and every one of you would be able to sit down and talk through how to complete it successfully. Which makes me kinda sad that no team really nailed it at the weekend. See the attached documents for the rationale behind writing it, and also how the judges were briefed.

Fundamentals

So, starting with the basics. What had happened before you got to the incident? You had heard some cries of distress, and you had walked past a phone. A couple had been walking through the park, and the male had been violently attacked. That is the scenario. So why is there any need to go through doors, running around car parks, banging on windows, and peering onto the roof. The scenario was exactly what you saw. That is the point of the scenario brief, to set the scene. If you asked the casualties, they were concerned about each other – they knew each other (in fact, they were married) and they would tell you that they had been attacked and the attackers had run off. Where in that scenario might you possibly need to find out a code for a security lock? Come back, and join me in the real world, it's a nice place. Far simpler than the Krypton Factor style place that a lot of teams seem to inhabit. Seriously, I had one team looking for four casualties... they had Simone, Christian, Simone's husband, and Christian's wife!

Observation

The first 10-15 seconds of every incident should be all about observation. In this incident, that observation should have started before you arrived at the incident – as you walked past a phone (which you had been told about in the written brief). Once in the incident, you should observe that there are two casualties. One of which is looking seriously ill. Looking more closely at the really ill casualty – he seems to have an awful lot of blood all over him (and a fair amount on the floor), and two pretty big holes in his chest. Holes in chests are generally bad things, and they are also things that “a trained lifesaver” cannot fix. You need to get the big yellow fun bus with the nice guys in green as soon as you possibly can. This guy is going to die quite soon, and you need that help as soon as possible. Lots and lots of points are available for this.

Information

Lots of teams love to ask lots of questions. This is definitely a good thing. However, make those questions relevant. “Do you have a first aid kit?” seems a bit of a daft thing to ask, if you are holding a first aid kit (and it wasn't just one person that did that)! “Do

you know where a phone is?" seems a bit of a daft thing to ask if you are the one who knows where the phone is. Think before you speak.

Machine-gun style questioning just confuses a casualty... often, it confused me! But it's really going to confuse a casualty if they are suffering from any kind of illness or trauma.

"Can you tell me what happened?" I would suggest, would be a good opening question to ask to either (or both) of the casualties. Continue from there with calm logical questions.

Don't get hung up on medical conditions. Rather than suggesting things that might be wrong with the casualty, take the time to assess them and come to rational decision. Pale face, pale hands, hollow looking eyes, slightly fast breathing rate, has just witnessed her husband being stabbed... what could this be? Shock perhaps? So then treat it as shock! Don't start suggesting that she might be asthmatic because she's breathing fast. Asthmatics suffering an attack don't breathe fast. Anaphylaxia sufferers won't be breathing fast. Wheezing is very different to breathing fast. Learn your medical conditions, know how to identify them - rather than just taking random guesses.

Share information between the team members (probably through the captain), make sure that everybody knows the full picture - but does everyone really need to know the minute detail? It's a difficult balance to strike, I agree. But, there is no point in three people all shouting different stuff at the captain at the same time. Think, does the captain really need to know that Simone has a graze on her hand? Is that a critical injury that needs to be dealt with immediately? No, so then it's probably not worth many points. If you've got a spare moment, then by all means, clean it up and bandage it... but the captain has got more important things to worry about.

Teams really need to communicate effectively. By effectively, you need to ensure that your message is heard and understood... that doesn't mean that you just shout it louder. However, balance that with against the information being so trivial that it's not going to make any difference... such as "Simone has a cat called Jester, and he's lost his collar."

Simone – Female Casualty

This casualty had just witnessed her husband get stabbed in the chest. She is pretty traumatised. Maybe, four loud larger-than-life lifesavers charging up to her shouting at her, isn't going to be very effective at calming her down and getting useful information from her. The scenario was very quiet, and she didn't need a lifesaver in her face shouting at her. A calm, reassuring voice talking softly was far more likely to get a response. Particularly if you introduce yourself, rather than just grabbing her and dragging her along with you. You are very likely to have an unhappy (possibly violent) casualty to deal with. This is NOT going to get you many points. Really think about what she has just gone through, she is not going to be very trusting of any strangers, having just watched two strangers stab her husband!

Lots of teams shouted about "checking for dangers", but what if Simone was the danger – maybe she was crouching down concealing a knife (she wasn't)? She could have

very easily attacked anybody coming close to her. Think about talking to people from a distance before you get close in. Don't just say "checking for dangers"... actually do it! Judges aren't stupid, and we do watch what you do - very carefully! If you are not checking for dangers, then you won't get points for it.

Generally, people seemed quite confused by Simone... as she wasn't obviously injured. However, if you took the time to look at her, you would notice that she was clearly shocked... very pale skin with hollow sunken eyes. Very few teams laid her down. She didn't need a lot of treatment, and she wasn't a difficult casualty - she just needed someone to be nice to her. There weren't a whole lot of points available for her, but you need every point you can get - so let's get stuck in with the easy stuff. Be nice! Just think, how would you like to be treated if you had just watched your nearest and dearest get a stabbing!!

Christian - Male Casualty

What was wrong with this guy? What did you actually have to deal with? A few bleeds! It's not tricky stuff here. However, what was he going to die from (fairly quickly)? Cardiac arrest due to hypovolemic shock (blood loss). What do we need to do to this guy asap? Treat him for shock. We can lie him down, and raise his legs very easily - and still be able to bandage his wounds. This would take about 10 seconds of the time, but would have a HUGE impact on his chance of survival (and consequently was worth some serious points), and very few teams did this!

Remember, shock kills!

The thing here that differentiated the good teams from the weaker teams was the identification of his injuries. Many people focussed on the split to his eyebrow, and the cuts to his hands and arms. The most serious injuries were the two deep stab wounds in his chest. Teams seemed to stay away from them, because they didn't know how to bandage them. Treating serious bleeds is NOT about bandaging. It is all about pressure. Apply pressure. Whether that's using gloved hands or using the absorbent pad of the bandage and just pushing. According to Christian, there was only one person who applied sufficient pressure to stop the bleed - and that was Blondie. Holding a bandage over a wound is not the same as applying pressure!

Bandaging over foreign bodies (in this case, broken glass) seemed to be difficult for people. The "bridging" or "tent" method was not seen very often. Pressure needs to be placed around the wound - and certainly not over it - a couple of teams just wacked the bandage straight on - pushing the glass deeper into his arm!! Again... why bother with bandages? We need to control the bleeding fast! So use your (gloved) fingers and hands to apply pressure to either side of the glass.

Do not use your own clothes for treating injuries. It is against the rules. You will be disqualified.

He had lots of injuries. Teams tended to focus on one or two injuries and treat them really well (even through to putting his cut hand in an elevation sling!). However, you need to think about priorities. His cut hand isn't going to kill him. The holes in his chest

and the amount of blood on the floor are! Let's deal with the bad things first, they are more serious, and so naturally, they are worth more points!

What else would have got you points? Being nice to him. Find out his name, introduce yourself, explain what you are doing. All the good casualty care basics. All the things that you would want someone to do to you if you had just been beaten up.

First Aid Kits

Clubs are quite happy to spend hundreds of pounds on fins and mannikins, but not to spend a tenner on some bits for your First Aid kits! Passing back kits just puts a lot of pressure on the later teams - as often bandages were being binned because of the blood contamination. Saying "I'm putting on gloves" does not get you any points. The only way to get points for the use of appropriate protection, is to use the appropriate protection! Buy a box of gloves for the club! They are not expensive. If you are feeling very flush, buy several boxes in different sizes - so that people can wear gloves that fit them! Just think, that's probably the easiest way to get points in a dry incident... spend a few quid, get some gloves, and get some points!

Teams had sat for a long time in isolation, yet when they came into the incident, they had got bandages rolled the wrong way round, bandages unrolled, and kits disorganised. Think about your efficiency. Organise every single one of your kits in the club in exactly the same way, and make sure everybody knows exactly where everything is.

In competitions bandages are assumed to be sterile when you bring them out of the first aid kit. However, if you then allow them to unravel, and drop on the floor - they are no longer clean. Putting all the mud and rubbish from the floor into Christian's wounds wasn't a good thing. This kind of sloppiness is easy to deal with, and you are just losing points unnecessarily, for very basic mistakes! If you drop a bandage, it's not the end of the world, get another one.

Practice your bandaging. Everybody should be able to do it. Quickly. Practice until you can bandage any simple bleed in any place on the body in about 30-40 seconds (whilst wearing gloves). You practice your starts, turns, ropethrow, and swim and tow like this.... why not First Aid too?

999 Call

Team captains should not have to spend 30 seconds briefing a team member how to make a 999 call. Every team member should know what information needs to be given. Every team member should remember where they are. It should take about 10 seconds to get the important bits of information - there were two casualties, one was shocked, and one had multiple stab wounds.

In the 999 call there were points allocated on a sliding scale depending on how fast you get to the phone. The sooner the better. So going back to the point about observation - remember where stuff is. Several teams lost tons of points by going for a wander around the car park or just ambling over to the phone. There were lots of points for giving the correct location. There were lots of points for saying that someone had been

stabbed/attacked/severe bleeding. Any of those words got you lots of points. That's the important stuff over and done with. All the other questions were just getting a few extra points. Nothing major.

Remember to call the police - there were extra points for that. (There has been a stabbing, maybe the attacker is still around).

Captaincy

Captains need to ensure that they are wearing significantly different hats to their team. This is in the rules.

Each team should only have one captain, sometimes this is easier said than done.

Some individuals (who weren't captains) clearly wanted to be, and found the team role very challenging.

Generally, shouting isn't necessary. Look to the people that do this all the time, the police, fire, and ambulance services are all very calm and controlled. So why should "trained lifesavers" be any different?

Summary of Key Points for Improvement

- Every team member to know where everything is in the First Aid kit
- Every team to have their own First Aid kit
- Every team to have a pair of gloves for every team member
- Every First Aid kit to have bandages correctly rolled.

- Your scene assessment starts before you get to the scene
- At the start of the incident, take 10 seconds to observe the whole scene
- Your casualty assessment starts before you get to the casualty
- Start to assess casualties before you are anywhere near them
- Don't just say "checking for danger". DO IT!
- If you need to get help, then GO GET HELP!

- Every team member to know exactly how to make a 999 call.
- Every team member to remember the details from the incident brief.

- Every team member should be able to do perfect CPR
- Every team member to be able to bandage a bleeding wound anywhere on the body in less than 45 seconds.
- For the bullet point above replace "bleeding wound" with any other First Aid condition that's in the Lifesaving and LifeSupport manuals.
- Every team member to be able to identify and treat shock.
- For the bullet point above replace "shock" with any other First Aid condition that's in the Lifesaving and LifeSupport manuals.
- Every team member to know First Aid and not rely on the captain to tell them what to do

- Every team member to know the rules of the SERC

- Be nice.
- Don't shout unless it's really necessary.