

Selected Topics

Prehospital Care

THE BREAKDOWN OF AN EMERGENCY SYSTEM FOLLOWING A GAS EXPLOSION IN OSAKA AND THE SUBSEQUENT RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS

Tsuguharu Ishida, MD, PhD,* Muneo Ohta, MD, PhD,†
and Tsuyoshi Sugimoto, MD, PhD‡

*Associate Professor, Division of Emergency and Critical Care Medicine, Hyogo College of Medicine, Hyogo

†Chairman of Osaka Prefectural Senri Critical Care Medical Center,

‡Chairman and Professor, Department of Traumatology, Osaka University School of Medicine

Reprint address: Tsuguharu Ishida, MD, Associate Professor, Division of Emergency and Critical Care Medicine, Hyogo College of Medicine, 1-1, Mukogawa-cho, Nishinomiya-City, Hyogo, 663, Japan

□ Abstract—Osaka, a modern urban metropolis in Japan, experienced a tragic gas explosion in 1970 when the dispatch room of the City Fire Department was in the process of being moved to a new building. Many unforeseen problems arose during this disaster: eg, there was an overall lack of leadership, confusion of communication, a need for triage, and lack of control of mass media.

The Osaka Medical Association organized a committee to resolve these problems. Their conclusions and recommendations were that a control headquarters be established at the scene of disaster, the number of ambulances and EMTs be increased, disaster tags be utilized, a special radio frequency be created, and a computer-aided command and control system for fire fighting and ambulance services be introduced. These recommendations have all been followed.

□ Keywords—disaster management; multiple casualty incident; gas explosion; emergency medical services

Introduction

Osaka, a modern urban metropolis with an area of 209 sq km and a population of 2.7

million people crammed into its densely inhabited 26 wards, is located in the southwest of Japan. Osaka has been called one of the greatest economic and advanced cities in the world. It has also been recognized for its advanced system of medical services. Emergency medicine in Japan originated in Osaka. Until 1970, when we experienced a tragic gas explosion, we were very proud of our emergency system. The explosion occurred on the day the dispatch room of the City Fire Department was being moved to a new building. Consequently, many unforeseen problems arose during this disaster. Without the usual efficient regulation from this dispatch room, the emergency system was swamped and unable to function properly.

Case Report

On April 8th, 1970, at 17:27, leakage from a gas line was found in a subway construction area. One minute later, two repair cars from the gas company arrived on the spot.

Prehospital Care focuses on the issues and practices that directly affect the type and quality of care administered by the emergency physician in the emergency department, and is coordinated by *Peter Pons, MD, St. Joseph's Hospital, Denver, Colorado.*

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