

December 2008 Riots in Greece

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Introduction: The purpose of this presentation is to review the effects of the riots that occurred in many Greek cities for more than two weeks in December 2008.

Methods: The chemical riot control agents (cRCA) used by the police and their effects on different populations in Athens and Kavala were examined. The use was extended for 17 consecutive days in Athens and five days in Kavala. The injury pattern of the demonstrators, civilians, and police officers were examined according to EKAB, police, and hospital records.

Results: The cRCA used were of three different species: CN, CS, and pepper spray. The prolonged use of all three cRCA had many effects on demonstrators, bystanders, and the general population. There were several cases of light chemical and combined trauma recorded, but no serious or severe injuries. The health problems caused by the use of cRCA were due to the amount of cRCA used and the irregular pattern of use. The effects lasted longer than initially estimated, due to the amount of cRCA used and duration of use/riots.

Conclusions: Despite the large amount of cRCA used for a prolonged period of time on a large number of persons, no serious chemical or combined trauma was recorded in Athens or in Kavala.

Keywords: Athens; chemical trauma; chemical warfare agents; riots; riot control agents

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Scene Hazards for Emergency Medical Services Personnel during the Recent Athens Riots

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Introduction: The purpose of this study was to review the hazards emergency medical services (EMS) personnel were exposed to during the riots that occurred in many Greek cities for more than two weeks in December 2008.

Methods: The incidents reported by EMS personnel deployed to the riots in December 2008 in Athens were recorded. Data of prior similar situations also were reviewed. Threats of violence, violent acts against personnel and vehicles, exposure to chemical riot control agents

(cRCA), and exposure to toxic smoke from fires were considered hazards or dangerous situations.

Results: In similar situations, all types of violent activities against EMS personnel resulted in minor injuries, distress, and destruction of vehicles. During the December 2008 riots in Athens, there was a large amount of distress among all EMS personnel deployed in "hot zones", but the injuries reported were limited and minor. This was due mainly to:

1. All EMS ambulance vehicles clearly were recognizable as such (color, markings);
2. No medical motorcycles were used;
3. No rapid medical deployment vehicles were used; and
4. Strict policies were in place to minimize the duration of presence of vehicles in hot zones.

Conclusions: Despite the intensity and duration of the riots, the effects on the EMS personnel deployed were minimal. This was due to a strict safety policy implemented by the dispatch center and the excellent distribution of the information horizontally and vertically.

Keywords: Athens; emergency medical services; exposure; hazard; riots

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Lessons Learned from Cyclone Gonu in Iran

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Introduction: Gonu, the second tropical cyclone of the 2007 North Indian Ocean cyclone season, developed from a persistent area of convection in the eastern Arabian Sea on 01 June. It affected Oman, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran. The cyclone hit Iran on Wednesday, 06 June 2007, causing waves up to 5.8 meters and moderate to heavy rain. Gonu affected three provinces including Sistan va Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and southern parts of Kerman. **Methods:** Log entries of involved organizations and rosters of deployed staff to the area were reviewed. Team leaders were interviewed using structured and unstructured questions.

Results: Throughout the affected areas, the cyclone caused 23 deaths (20 from drowning), and >20,000 houses were flooded. The total damage in Iran was estimated at 2 billion IRR (US\$216 million). In this presentation, effects of Cyclone Gonu in Iran and what was done before, during, and after the cyclone will be examined.

Conclusions: This incident highlighted that a special protocol should be prepared for all types of natural disasters. Responsible organizations should train their personnel according to the prepared protocols and service packages. Early warning, proper community involvement, access to essential data for risk analysis, special attention on safe hospitals and infrastructures, and coordination and command integrity were among the most important experiences.

Keywords: Cyclone Gonu; disaster; Iran; lessons learned; planning; response; recovery

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