BOOK REVIEW

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‘When Violence Erupts: A Survival Guide for Emergency Responders’

Dennis R. Krebs.

Jones and Bartlett Publishers. 2002.

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Malcolm Boyle

Senior Lecturer, Department of Emergency Community Health and Paramedic Practice
Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

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This book is written by a Fire Department medical officer and is primarily aimed at fire, rescue, and emergency medical services personnel in the USA. The front cover has a photograph which depicts an Emergency Responder (ER) fleeing from the direction of a parked motor vehicle, whose driver is aiming a firearm in the responder's direction. The image immediately provokes thoughts of a situation that thankfully, most ERs generally, do not have to face every day.

The first three chapters of twenty-one, discuss survival tips and techniques for approaching incidents involving such scenarios as, a vehicle parked on the side of a highway and a general incident on the highway. While some of the information may be relevant to situations involving paramedics generally, these chapters appear to be directed more towards police, than other ERs as it provides instruction on dealing with firearms and other serious weapons than other general forms of violence.

Chapter four extends on the book's cover image as it describes scenarios faced by the ER when dealing with possible armed encounters – which again thankfully, is not a common occurrence facing most ERs around the world.

Chapters five and six cover violent incidents in residential locations. The images show residences of weatherboard construction, which given the positioning of the paramedic to the side of the door would appear to be ineffective if an offender decided to shoot a firearm from inside. Again the information covered here has some

relevance to EMTs in general but may be more relevant to those practicing in the USA.

The information on how to handle a situation with an abusive, potentially violent bystander in a domestic dispute is the only chapter so far which has any practical relevance to paramedics. There is information on avoidance techniques together with points on how the paramedic should approach the potentially or actually violent person.

Chapter eight, is about how to deal with public bar situations and could have been incorporated into the chapter on residential situations as the principles are very similar.

The next two chapters are on cover and concealment, and hostage situations, which describe tactical procedures, again aimed more at police, with some advice on survival techniques in hostage situations which could be useful to fire fighters and paramedics.

There are two chapters on bombs, other types of weapons, and drug laboratories. While some of the weapons pictured in the book are interesting, it is somewhat difficult to see why the authors have included an illustration of various detonation cords. Many of the documents and recommended actions included in this chapter are specific to the USA.

Chapter 13 covers self defence and is useful to paramedics from any country, as it provides relevant hints and actions to consider in the event of being attacked.

The chapters on tactical medical support and mass casualty situations are relevant only to the USA as it describes how paramedics operate as part of a SWAT team in all multiple hostage and mass shooting situations.

The final chapters are specific to the USA which is evident in the way the author expresses evidence preservation, gangs and gang warfare, civil disturbances, patient restraint, and terrorism. The first appendix lists brief descriptions of incidents involving violent acts against ERs, most of which describe the injuries sustained by victims as a consequence of firearms and/or being attacked with an object. The second appendix discusses body armour, its benefits, and guidance for care – while perhaps useful to military and police personnel, this not relevant to ERs in general.

In summary, it is difficult to generalise the information contained in the book to any, if at all, country other than the USA, as the information deals mainly with situations that are not commonly experienced by the average fire or emergency medical responder. Except for the section on dealing with violent persons, the issues are very specific to emergency response and operational issues in the USA, which does not reflect guidance to ERs in general.

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