Major Incidents and Triage

Major Incident

Any incident where the number, severity, or type of live casualties, or by its location, requires extraordinary resources.

NB: A major incident for one service will not necessarily represent a major incident for the others.

Reporting a Major Incident

Certain information is required. A useful mnemonic to remember this is METHANE.

M Major Incident
E Exact location
T Type of incident
H Hazards at scene
A Access and egress routes
N Number of casualties involved
E Emergency services present and requested

Triage

Triage means ‘to sort’ or ‘to choose’ and applies to the prioritizing of casualties for treatment.

Triage should:
- Aim to do the ‘most for the most’
- Be rapid
- By dynamic
- Be reproducible (i.e. safe)

In an informal sense, triage is performed on every casualty seen, to assign appropriate people and resources to treat them, and to prioritise specific problems.

In a mass casualty situation, formal triage methods are used to assign casualties into the following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1/T1</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Immediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2/T2</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Urgent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3/T3</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Delayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Expectant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Dead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A useful system for initial triage (‘making order out of chaos’) is the triage sieve.
**Triage sieve:**

1. Can the casualty walk?
   - Yes → Delayed
   - No → Q2

2. Assess breathing
   - Yes → Q4
   - No → Q2

3. Open airway, reassess breathing
   - Yes → Immediate
   - No → Dead

4. Assess breathing rate
   - >30 or <10 → Immediate
   - 10-30 → Q5

5. Assess circulation (pulse/cap refill)
   - >120/>2s → Immediate
   - <120/<2s → Urgent

No treatment should be performed during triage, with the exception that a simple airway adjunct may be inserted. As a result assessment of each casualty should take seconds. Someone classed as dead should receive no further treatment.

**Expectant category**

The expectant category is used to describe someone who has only a low chance of survival, even if considerable resources are dedicated to them. It is rarely required outside of war/major natural disasters, due to the size of extraordinary response that can generally be mounted if required. However, if it is not instituted when needed then more people will die as resources are used by those who will die anyway and thus diverted away from those who could survive. The use of this category will be decided by the senior medical officer at the site, and to date it has never been required in Britain.

Triage is extremely difficult to do rapidly and accurately, and should be left to someone with appropriate training and experience.

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May 2005