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DMAT-PR1 *In focus*

ADDRESSING THE PERSONAL SAFETY OF DMAT IN AREAS OF DISASTER .

Violence in disasters against first responders and medical emergency personnel is a well known problem, far greater than what is being reported, however it has not been adequately addressed (Rivera, 2010).

DMAT-PR1 learned to manage and survive in disaster situations

First responders and emergency medical personnel are exposed to violent acts while responding to crisis, disaster and other emergency situations, but only Law-enforcement and Military personnel are actually equipped and trained in the use of less than lethal force that includes tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP's) associated with unarmed combat. And although in a perfect world law-enforcement and Military personnel would provide protection for emergency response personnel, they are also expected to protect communities, businesses and critical infrastructure. Reality is that there are not enough officers to do all of the above and provide security for the responders and care takers (Rivera, 2010).

On October 15, 2011 the DMAT-PR1 received a Workshop on "Violence in Disasters." The event focused on the problem of violence against first responders and medical emergency response personnel at the work place and during disasters and crisis situations. It consisted of a four hours training presentation by Dr. Luis Rivera- a Retired Special Forces Officer and experienced Martial Arts instructor. The session was divided in two; a 2 hours lecture and a 2 hours practical exercise through a Performance Oriented (POT) Methodology.

DMAT-PR1... *ready in every way*

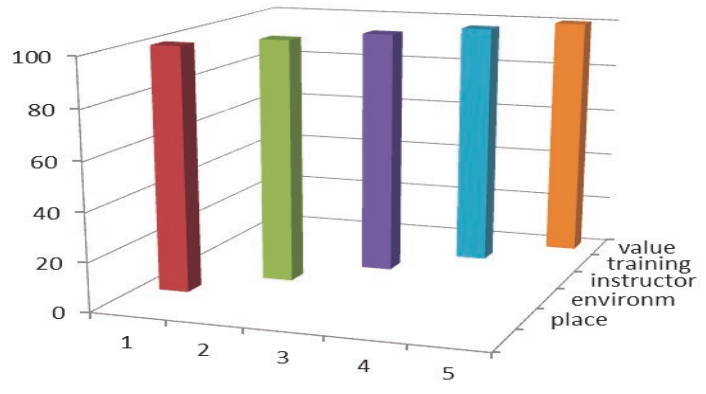
34 members of DMAT-PR1 and 3 visitors participated in the workshop presented by Dr. Luis Rivera, who provided a lecture on violence in disasters and crisis situations, as well as instruction and practice on self-defense concepts and techniques. The feedback from participants indicated the instruction, and training were of high quality and relevant to the team's safety and security . All agreed that the information and instruction will provide the DMAT-PR1 with the necessary tools to protect themselves not only in disasters and crisis situations, but also in their personal and daily lives.

Getting the most from our meetings

The team discussed concepts of violence in disasters and practiced techniques to defend themselves with non-lethal force.

The program of instruction is based on a two year study for a doctoral dissertation that determined the perception and attitude regarding the validity of a personal protection training program as means of non-lethal force to mitigate the risk of violence in disasters or crisis situation. The study measured the outcomes on confidence, self esteem, self-efficacy and perceived control. The results of the study confirmed the validity of the Bare Essential First Responders' Self-defense Training (BE-FiRST) program. The lecture addressed background information on violence during and in the aftermath of Katrina, the 2005 floods in Guyana, the Haiti earthquake, violence in the emergency rooms among other related situations. It also covered situational awareness, and how it can be applied in the two separate and distinct stages of violent confrontations—pre-conflict and confrontation. It also concentrated on the legal aspects of personal protection, managing stressors associated with violence situations, conflict de-escalation techniques, awareness of the operational environment and surveillance detection tactics, the risk of rape and rape prevention techniques, personal protection strategies and the psychological factors that influence a person's reactions to danger situations (Rivera, 2010). In the second half of the training session all participants were instructed on, and required to participate in situational focused hands on self-defense training that consisted of easy to perform techniques that enhances the victims ability to identify indicators of a violence attack, prepare mentally and physically to confront the attacker, neutralize the attack, and disable the attacker for the purpose of creating a window of opportunity to escape from the situation and call for help.

Evaluation of training by participants



Perfect score!

Evaluations received from the DMAT-PR1 participants were rated as excelente!

Some of the comments were related to the caliber of instruction and the knowledge, expertise and interest demonstrated by the instructor. Thanks to Dr. Rivera for making us aware of the risks and possibilities of violence during disasters and the importance to learn the use of non-lethal force for our defense. Thanks to all the 34 Team members and 3 visitors for taking the time to participate in the first of three training sessions for the BE-FiRST certification.

Article by Abigail Matos,
Team A-Cmdr. DMAT-PR1