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Police Spiritual Welfare Info-Journal:

Operations in a Multicultural Context

Operations in a multicultural context place great demands on emergency services and should be well prepared. Operational experience and knowledge gained from related disciplines can be evaluated.

Selection of possible tactical issues to be considered:

- communication problems through foreign languages and possibly incomprehensible gestures
- panic, anxiety in refugees from conflict areas
- emotions that may be acted out violently
- fears due to xenophobic crimes of the past
- Lack of reassuring knowledge of well-organized and efficient emergency services
- disturbance of emergency forces by religious taboos (e.g., if Muslims do not or only in a limited way tolerate the touching of women by males of foreign religions)
- participation of many family members or friends at the event, who may have de-escalating or escalating effects
- Inappropriate reaction of emergency forces to the "clash of cultures"
- Limited acceptance of the authority of forces by the victims, who are more based on authority structures of their family or cultural context

Possible preventive measures:

- Integration of the topic in education and training, also in combination with local competent partners (foreign officers, churches, clergy of non-Christian religions, multi-cultural clubs, personal friends of police officers,
- Regular use of information on socially deprived areas
- Use of exercises with realistic representation of the accident
- Close exchange with other emergency services, especially fire and rescue service on tactical experience in this sector
- Reflection of the own attitude to this area of activity, with the help of qualified counselors or trusted colleagues
- Integration of people of other cultures in the Police Training and Management

Measures in operations:

- An immediate participation of competent mental health supporters, if necessary, such as task forces of the paramedics, pastors, mental-health-skilled workers, interpreters
- If possible and desired, use of helpful and cooperative and capable foreign fellow citizens as mediators
- Choosing of those persons as a contact, who have a greater authority in the social context of the affected people
- Blocking of the operation area if necessary – taking into account very strong emotions and reactions and a high number of human resources on behalf of the emergency forces
- Keep calm, keep an emotional distance, act correctly and determined, do not feel provoked
- If possible allow caretaking of affected by loved ones

