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SFMD Firefighters Trained to Assist AJPD as New S.W.A.T. Medics

When you see the Apache Junction Police Department Special Weapons and Tactics (AJPD SWAT) team out on assignment, intervening to help bring problem situations under control, it is good to know they are trying to accomplish their assignments without injury or loss of life. But because these situations don't always go as scripted, law enforcement long ago recognized the need for having paramedics integrated into their tactical / SWAT units. To fill that need, Superstition Fire & Medical District (SFMD) began providing Firefighter / Paramedics as "Tactical Medics" for the Police Department's SWAT team back in the 1989. Recently, SFMD added three new Tactical Medics to this specialized program.

These new Tactical Medics will train with the AJPD SWAT team on a regular basis to gain a working knowledge of the team, its tools and tactics – including mission objectives, weapons, pyrotechnics and other devices likely to be deployed, as well as communication policies and standard operating procedures. In support of these operations, Tactical Emergency Medical Services personnel take over the responsibilities of rendering emergency medical care under fire.

AJPD Chief Thomas Kelly was praiseworthy of this special public safety relationship, "These individuals are highly trained to respond to those life threatening incidents that all SWAT members face when deployed." "SFMD medics are surely the best insurance policy the SWAT member has - if something goes wrong they have the best alongside them. We are very fortunate to have an outstanding working relationship with our Fire District!" continued Chief Kelly.

SFMD Fire Chief Paul Bourgeois said, "We are honored to be able to continue and strengthen our partnership with the Apache Junction Police Dept. in this critical public safety program. We are proud of our three new, and one current members who have worked so diligently to be accepted as part of the SWAT team." "These individuals are highly motivated, multi-disciplined and extremely fit group of diverse personalities, ready to employ their paramedic skills under fire at a moment's notice," added Bourgeois.

These Tactical Medics are not Police Officers. Their primary mission is medical support for the tactical law enforcement operation. The tactical law enforcement training that each member receives, enables them to operate efficiently and safely within the inner perimeter during a crisis providing immediate, life-saving medical interventions. Having trained medics integrated into the SWAT team can make the difference between life and death for a police officer or the person they are trying to arrest.

“Being a SWAT Medic is about being there for my brother police officers, fire fighters and our citizens when they are involved in the most violent of situations,” said SFMD Tactical Medic Mark Blackstone, who has been doing this since the program started locally in 1989. One of the two original tactical medics to work with AJPD, Blackstone is passionate about his role, “My sole purpose is to get to them, treat their injuries if needed, protect them and evacuate them to safety.”

The Tactical Medics program is the industry standard among tactical law enforcement teams, and these individuals receive specialized training in operations such as ‘Advanced Tactical Airway’ techniques, ‘Remote Assessment Methodology’, ‘Basic Tactical Training/ Basic SWAT School’, and other necessary disciplines to help keep them safe while they work to save lives.

If you would like to know more about the SFMD, please visit our web site at www.sfmd.az.gov, or call our offices at 480-982-4440.

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