

Scene Survey – Part 1

(ITLS* Primary Survey – Scene Size-up)

Take charge of the situation

- Why? How?
- Find out what happened. Make the decision to take action.
- Plan and organize your actions.
- Most often taking charge is merely remaining calm and doing something reasonable given the situation. If another first aider is already on-scene ask if you can help.

Call out to attract bystanders (Note: NOT part of ITLS*)

- Why?
- Bystanders may have information concerning what has happened (mechanism of injury)
- May know the casualty (relevant medical history)
- Can help with casualty care, especially in the case of multiple casualties.
- Can contact/provide other resources, call 911 if needed.

Assess hazards of the scene and make the area safe

- Why? How?
- Be careful, be safe. There is already at least one casualty, don't let yourself become another.
- Called Scene Size-up in ITLS*, often a “windshield survey” of the scene from inside a vehicle
- Glass Gas Fire Wire – Give examples of these hazards
- Confined space casualties (e.g. large fuel tanks, grain silos) – May lack oxygen or be filled with an invisible toxic gas or vapour.
- Natural Disaster – unstable structures such as buildings, bridges, antennas
- Unsafe road conditions, rain, ice, darkness, fog, whiteouts, blind curves, hidden entrances, sinkholes, washouts, debris on roadway, burst water mains.
- Vehicles – unstable vehicles, leaking fuel or oil, sharp metal edges, hot or moving engine parts, dangerous goods on a commercial vehicle
- Threats from bystanders (crime scene) – gangs, drunks, drug users. Are there weapons involved?
- Water – cold, fast moving, deep, floating debris, polluted
- Weather – lightning threat, cold, high winds (blown debris), rains causing mudslides and flooding, fog obscuring scene
- Fires – smoke, unstable structures, debris, danger of fire spreading unexpectedly
- Blast scene – hazardous materials (e.g. debris from meth lab), dust, smoke, broken glass, unstable structures, criminal activity or crime scene
- Danger from animals – insects, large wild animals, rabid wild animals, vicious domestic animals, injured or frightened animals
- Rough terrain – high angle rescue (call for specialized equipment), unstable ground, danger of landslide or avalanche
- Finally – How many casualties and what type of backup or resources do you need to call for? Be aware that some casualties may not be in your current line of sight (e.g. thrown from vehicle, trapped in rubble). Check for items which may give you a clue: children’s toys, personal articles, passenger manifests etc.

Put on personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Why? How?
- Saliva, blood, urine, feces, vomitus
- Human bites. Why are human bites dangerous?
- Drug users may have used syringes or other dangerous objects in their pockets
- Protect from items at scene (e.g. sharp metal edges in a motor vehicle accident)
- HIV/AIDS
- Hepatitis (ABC)
- Gloves, CPR mask, eye protection, N95 mask, isolation gown

*ITLS - *International Trauma Life Support*. A specialized protocol and course for professionals involved in prehospital trauma care such as military medical personnel, firefighters, and emergency medical services.