



WATCHLINE



August 2, 2017

Thirty Injured in NYC Ferry ‘Hard Landing’ – Thirty people suffered injuries ranging from minor to serious when a New York Water Taxi came into the West 39th Street dock excessively hard. Among the injured was a child who suffered a serious head injury, according to reports, and at least a dozen were transported to hospitals. The ferry was carrying 125 passengers when the mishap occurred, shortly after 4 p.m. on Friday.

Assessment: A “hard landing” might sound somewhat innocuous, but New Yorkers know how dangerous this can be where passenger ferries are involved; eleven people were killed and 165 injured in 2003 when a Staten Island Ferry crashed into the terminal pier. First responders in cities such as New York—dissected by waterways—must account for the [booming increase](#) in demand for ferry service, and be prepared to respond both at dock sites and upon the water. [Drilling on triage for MCIs](#) is imperative for successful operations.



FDNY Triage, Treat, and Transport

Sydney Raids Disrupt Airplane Plot – Australian police made four arrests in raids across Sydney late Saturday over what Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull termed an Islamic-inspired terrorism plot to “bring down an airplane.” Police describe the plot as “sophisticated and elaborate” and believe it was helped along by Islamic State operatives in Syria. Two men in their 50s, as well as the adult son of one, and another 30-something relative, were taken into custody and their properties combed by forensics teams. Few details have been released, but it has been reported that a meat grinder was to be used in an IED, possibly containing TATP. One of the 50-year-old men was later released.

Assessment: One Australian terror expert [called the plot](#), “the most sophisticated” ever in that country. Another pointed to the “headlines terrorists crave” as motivation for undertaking such a sensational attack, which risks detection, as opposed to something less spectacular, but possibly more lethal. Australian authorities were apparently tipped off by American and British counterparts working off of intercepted messages from conspirators in Syria. When viewed against a backdrop of multiple attacks by individuals using knives and vehicles, it is apparent that a dichotomy exists between the simple and the sophisticated, both of which require preparedness.

Package Bomb Intended for Another Kills Landlord in Queens, N.Y. – An exploding package left near a mailbox in front of a two-family home in the NYC borough of Queens severely burned the landlord of the building when he picked it up to examine the parcel after several days at the location. The 73-year-old man died four days after the incident, which left him burned over 80 percent of his body. The package was described as cylindrical and perhaps the size of a cardboard oatmeal container, and was only labelled with the word “Mac” on it. It was also described as a low explosive, perhaps of flash powder such as those used in fireworks. Police believe that the landlord, who did not live at the location, was not the intended target.

Assessment: Investigators believe the device activated when the man opened it, as designed. Suspicious package reports are a daily occurrence in NYC. Often the location is one of high traffic or in mass transportation systems, unlike the object in this story, which was situated in a quiet and remote neighborhood. This, coupled with the time (days) that the package was there, might seemingly add up to a low probability of danger. Responders should give reported suspicious packages due respect and follow SOPs regarding safety, operations, and communications.



“Kafir” inscribed on cleaver portends target(s) of terrorists

‘Three Musketeers’ (Plus One) Convicted in U.K. Terror Plot – Four men were convicted in British court this week for plotting a terror attack against police or military personnel in 2016. Three of the men, from the Midlands, were known to counterterror police and went to great lengths to avoid monitoring, and eventually set up a private Telegram group called “the three musketeers.” Their choice of weapons—neither muskets nor swords—was found under the front seat of one of the trio’s cars: a pipe bomb, an air gun, and a meat cleaver with the word “kafir” (unbeliever) scratched into the side of the blade. On Friday, a man killed one and injured four with a kitchen knife in a random spree at a supermarket in Hamburg, Germany; he was [reportedly](#) known to authorities as a “radicalized Islamist with psychological problems.”

Assessment: In May 2013, Lee Rigby, a British Army soldier, was run down with a car in Woolwich and then killed (and partially beheaded) with knives and a meat cleaver. Edged weapon attacks, whether carefully planned or otherwise, should continue to be on responders’ radar. Video in the Hamburg supermarket shows that bystanders used chairs to defend against the assailant.

Blackout Prompts Mandatory Evacuation of Barrier Beaches in N.C. – Summer vacationers and residents at Ocracoke and Hatteras islands in North Carolina were ordered to [evacuate](#) after a construction mishap led to a widespread power outage affecting 50,000 people. The Ocracoke evacuation was especially problematic as the only way to exit the island is via ferry. Gas stations and grocery stores were taxed to their limits as people stocked up in anticipation of their long wait to get off the island. Also, the evacuation has crippled the local economy, which thrives during the summer months. Officials said that it could be 4-6 days until power is restored ([improved](#) from previous estimates), and the islands are under a state of emergency.

Assessment: Ironically, the construction activity associated with the outage is part of a bridge project to connect Ocracoke with Hatteras, which will give the occupants of the more remote island another way off the island (for next time). On top of the regular duties, local responders, along with the health department, and area NGOs, are [providing](#) food and power-charging stations, and a large number of generators are being brought in. Local responders, whose primary duty is exigent responses and public safety, offer support services in times of crisis, especially when the population is stranded and without proper supplies. Ocracoke Island does have a health and emergency care center, but it is unclear of its capacity and the level of treatment that can be provided.

Yesterday’s Preparations Aided Tomorrowland Fire Evacuation – A fire that [erupted](#) in a “matter of seconds,” likely due to fireworks, on the outdoor stage of a music festival at Can Zam park in Barcelona led to the evacuation of over 20,000 people. It appears the mass exodus at Tomorrowland Unite Spain event was well handled, owed to pre-planned emergency evacuation procedures, which flashed on the stage screen to guide fleeing concertgoers. Festival organizers said, in a [statement](#), a few days after the disrupted event that there were no reported injuries and that the investigation continues.

Assessment: Though life hazards at mass gathering should never be taken lightly, the fire in an outdoor venue made it infinitely easier to evacuate the crowd. Organizers and responders did not have to worry about smoke inhalation in interior spaces, or evacuees bottlenecking in a labyrinth of tunnels. Some of the worst fire disasters in U.S. history occurred in night clubs or performance venues, such as fires in the Station nightclub in R.I. (2003), Happy Land, NYC (1990), Beverley Hills Supper Club, Kentucky (1977), and the Coconut Grove, Boston (1942). Theater fires can be the most lethal, such as the Iroquois Theater fire in 1903, and the Brooklyn Theater fire in 1876, which caused more than 600 and 300 fatalities, respectively. For emergencies in outdoor venues, panic-induced stampedes, and subsequent trampling, would be primary concerns.



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