

TACTICAL MEDICS PROVIDE ON-SCENE EMERGENCY CARE

/Kelly Foreman,
Public Information Officer

When the officers of the Northern Kentucky Emergency Response Unit are called out, they can take comfort knowing that they are supported by medical professionals.

A few years ago, St. Elizabeth Hospital Emergency Room Nurse Practitioner Bill Cooper and NKY ERU team commander Jon Lonaker talked about the benefits of having tactical medics as part of the team. Cooper joined the team in 2007, and about a year and a half later, Emergency Room Physician Brian Donoghue signed on as medical director.

The NKY ERU tactical medics are just two samples of medical professionals who have joined teams around the state in various capacities.

"They have full law enforcement powers," Lonaker said of Donoghue and Cooper. "They are not technically policemen, but they are deputized, deploy with us and are armed for self protection. They volunteer and receive absolutely no compensation whatsoever. They are always here, even when we call them in the middle of the night. They really want to be here and do this stuff on their own time."

"Our primary mission is to be here for the officers if any are injured," Donoghue said. "Secondarily, we are here if anybody else is injured. The primary reason we offer immediate care to officers

is because there can be dangerous situations where we might not be able to get Emergency Medical Services into a situation for quite an amount of time. So, we can bridge that gap to get them emergency care immediately."

Donoghue and Cooper train with the team, too, to better understand and prepare for the types of emergencies to which the team responds, Cooper said.

"We train with them, number one, to see how they work," Cooper said. "But sometimes you also learn to be alert of any hidden dangers. Tactical medic is more of a military-based emergency care. Ordinary life squads aren't trained in this. You are put in a position of higher risk of danger."

"It can change the focus of how you provide care in a dangerous situation," Donoghue elaborated. "What you might focus on is different when you potentially could be under fire than if you're in a safe situation. That requires training and practice in the real situation."

Having tactical medics on site also is of great benefit if their services are needed because they already understand the environment of the call and those involved, which can save precious time.

"Instead of bringing somebody in cold who might not know, for instance, how to open these threat-level three vests, they have all their experience from training with us and they are familiar with it all," Lonaker said. ■

TACTICAL MEDICS PROVIDE ON-SCENE CARE TO OFFICERS, SUSPECTS AND OTHER INJURED PERSONS DURING NKY ERU CALL OUTS. THE TWO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS SERVE AS VOLUNTEERS TO THE TEAM.

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