Suicide Bags AKA “Exit Bags”

FIREGUARD

Suicide Bags AKA “Exit Bags”
Suicide Bags

• Also known as “Exit Bags”, suicide bags are fast becoming one of the most prescribed forms of Euthanasia worldwide. They are said to provide a fast, peaceful, undetectable death to those wishing to commit suicide.

• Simple, inexpensive with readily available ingredients make this device much more accessible to a greater population of people.

• Units have begun to encounter these devices on EMS emergencies.

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Construction

- Device consists of a large plastic bag, a drawstring that tightens around the neck, and a hose attached to a gas container.
- Inert gases such as *Helium & Nitrogen* are then pumped into the bag from a container through a small hose. Death occurs by Oxygen displacement.
  - When inhaled, Helium and Nitrogen offset the body’s natural reaction to oxygen deprivation.
  - They do not trigger the panic, struggle and sense of suffocation that carbon dioxide does.
Encounters

• First Responder Units
  – Most recently, FDNY CFR & EMS units came across a Suicide Bag on June 17, 2012
  – They were assigned to a “CARDIAC ARREST” emergency.
  – Upon arrival they found a 22 year old male who had tied a plastic bag over his head using a draw a string to cinch the bottom tight.
  – Attached to the bag units found a hose running into the bag from a nitrogen cylinder.

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Chemical Gases Used

- Nitrogen
- Helium
  - Both Inert Gases; both classified as “Simple Asphyxiants”- they will displace Oxygen, and create an Oxygen deficient atmosphere.
  - Safe Atmospheric Conditions:
    - Oxygen Concentration between 19.5% and 23.5%.
Containers

- Gases can be held in several container types:
  - Helium can be found in pre-packaged disposable cylinders.
  - As an alternative to these Helium cylinders, individuals are recommended to fill empty LPG cylinders with compressed Nitrogen.
Hazards

- Oxygen displacement is our primary concern as first responders.
- Patients or DOA’s using the suicide bag device may cause oxygen levels in room or apartment to become dangerously low, creating a hazardous atmosphere (asphyxiant type).
- A person entering such a space will replace the oxygen in the lungs within one or two breaths, and will be quickly overcome by simple asphyxiation.

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Tactics

• Because of this asphyxiating hazard, units should consider donning SCBA and request units with a meter to determine if the atmosphere contains sufficient levels of O2.
• The only safe way to detect a lack of oxygen is through the use of an oxygen meter carried by Ladder, Rescue and Haz Mat Companies.
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