



Protocol 136

ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)

PROTOCOL 136 ADDS a new ECHO-level determinant to the Police Priority Dispatch System™ (PPDS®) and changes police responses to certain situations; therefore, it must be implemented with a complete understanding of its use and underlying dispatch objectives. Because Protocol 136 is utilized during high-risk situations, EPDs, police officers, and administrators must be trained and prepared to provide specific instructions to callers.

This Special Procedures Briefing will provide you with the information you need to direct callers in lifesaving procedures and thereby decrease their potential risk in active assailant situations.

136 ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)

KEY QUESTIONS	POST-DISPATCH INSTRUCTIONS																							
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What type of weapons are involved? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. (Gun) How many shots have been fired? b. (Gun) When was the last time you heard shots fired? 2. How many suspects are involved? 3. Where's the suspect now? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. (Suspect left/leaving/circulating) How did s/he leave? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. (Vehicle) Obtain the vehicle description. — ii. What direction was s/he going? b. Obtain the suspect's description. 4. Can you safely evacuate/leave the building/area? <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Yes _____</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">No or Unknown _____</p> 5. (LOCKDOWN) Where exactly are you? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What's the best way to get to you? b. How many people are with you? 6. How many people are in the building/area? 7. Does the suspect appear to be wearing a bulletproof vest or body armor? 8. Did you see the suspect carrying anything? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. (Yes) Describe it to me. 9. Did you hear the suspect saying anything? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. (Yes) What did s/he say? 10. (Suspect on scene) Did s/he arrive in a vehicle? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. (Yes) Obtain the vehicle description. b. (Yes) Where's the vehicle now? 11. Has the suspect taken any hostages? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. (Yes) How many? b. (Yes) Exactly where are they? 12. How many people are injured? + 13. Is there anything else you can tell me? 	<div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <p>(Evacuation)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If the assailant (attacker) leaves, tell me immediately. b. Do not put yourself in any (more) danger. <p>(LOCKDOWN)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. If the assailant (attacker) is nearby, keep very quiet and stay out of sight. </div> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>S-1 * Do computer check.</p> <p>S-2 * Follow department policy regarding the notification of department administration, specialty units (SWAT), and bordering agencies.</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>DLS * Link to ☎ X-1 unless:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Stay on the Line _____</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">☎</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">X-2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Urgent Disconnect _____</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☎</td> <td style="text-align: center;">X-3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Safety Disconnect _____</td> <td style="text-align: center;">☎</td> <td style="text-align: center;">X-4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Evacuation _____</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S-1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LOCKDOWN _____</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S-2</td> </tr> </table> </div> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin-top: 5px;"> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 10%;">LEVELS</th> <th style="width: 5%;">#</th> <th style="width: 60%;">DETERMINANT DESCRIPTORS</th> <th style="width: 20%;">→ C E G K M O CODES</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">E</td> <td style="font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">1</td> <td style="font-weight: bold;">ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)</td> <td style="font-weight: bold;">136-E-1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Stay on the Line _____	☎	X-2	Urgent Disconnect _____	☎	X-3	Safety Disconnect _____	☎	X-4	Evacuation _____		S-1	LOCKDOWN _____		S-2	LEVELS	#	DETERMINANT DESCRIPTORS	→ C E G K M O CODES	E	1	ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)	136-E-1
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SITUATIONS WARRANTING THE USE OF PROTOCOL 136

Protocol 136 is to be used only under the following circumstances:

- When an armed assailant has used **any type of weapon** to inflict **deadly physical force** on others and **continues** to do so while having **unrestricted access** to additional victims.
- When an armed assailant is believed to be in an area with unrestricted access to additional victims and there is an indication that s/he intends to use deadly physical force.

DESCRIPTION ESSENTIALS		Determinant Suffixes	Axioms
<p>Weapons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gun (pistol, rifle, shotgun) • Knife (long, short) • Club (bat, tire iron) • Other (glass, bottle, vehicle) • Explosive (bomb) <p>Person(s) (armed suspects first)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race • Gender • Clothing • Age (DOB) • Demeanor (calm, emotional, intoxicated) • Name/Relationship • Address/Phone number • Build/Height/Weight • Hair color/length/style • Other identifiable characteristics (facial hair, accent, tattoos, piercings) • Eye color • Complexion • Hat • Shoes • Jewelry <p>Vehicle (CYMBALS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color • Year • Make/Model • Body style • Additional (paintwork, damage) • License • State/Province <p>Boat (Vessel)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size • Color • Name • Registration number • Type (inboard, outboard, sail, cruiser, speed, racing, pontoon, ship) 	<p>The suffix codes help to delineate the specific type of weapon:</p> <p>C = Club E = Explosive G = Gun K = Knife M = Multiple weapon types O = Other</p> <p>ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)</p> <p>An armed person who has used any type of weapon to inflict deadly physical force on others and continues to do so while having unrestricted access to additional victims.</p> <p>LOCKDOWN</p> <p>A response utilized by schools, businesses, or individuals that secures people in a facility or room to minimize their exposure to an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER).</p> <p>Rules</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ASSAULT situations in which a suspect does not have unrestricted access to additional victims should be handled on Protocol 106. 2. Evacuating, if safe to do so, is the best action callers can take to save lives. However, if this is not possible, instructions for callers to go into a LOCKDOWN are critical. 3. Hostage situations developing in the course of an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) scenario should be handled on Protocol 136. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individuals who are found by an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) and cannot get away should be mentally prepared to fight for their lives by using weapons, throwing objects, acting aggressively, and yelling. 2. Most victims of the Columbine High School massacre were found in the library where students were unable to evacuate or go into a LOCKDOWN. 3. The term "active shooter" is a phrase coined by law enforcement to describe armed assailants who use deadly force on individuals while having unrestricted access to additional victims. These assailants commonly use firearms, hence the term "active shooter"; however, any weapon could be used. <p>NTOA Statement</p> <p>NTOA (National Tactical Officers Association) cautions against a change in police response based solely on a time delay of when shots were reportedly last heard. This time delay, by itself, does not negate the need for an immediate response. The perpetrator may be using, or preparing to use, other weapons (knives, IEDs, etc.), or her/his shots may not be audible. If the threat's location is not known, officers should begin searching or rescue wounded victims. Officers should transition to a hostage/barricade situation, if necessary, based only on the totality of circumstances.</p>	
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Note: Assault situations in which the assailant does not have unrestricted access to additional victims, or in which the assailant has given no indication of intent to harm additional victims, do not meet the definition of an **ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)** and should be handled on Protocol 106.

ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) SITUATIONS

ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incidents can quickly overwhelm the capacity of your emergency service agencies. Calls to 9-1-1 can overload phone lines, victims can outnumber available paramedic crews and emergency room beds, and the size and scale of the event can easily exhaust available police resources. An event at a large public space or school can also clog streets with anxious parents or family members, making the response of additional units or the transport of the injured impossible.

Traditionally, ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incidents are over in a matter of minutes. This short time frame places police officers in a difficult position with regard to officer and citizen safety and also places emergency communications in a critical role. Emergency dispatchers can contribute to a more positive outcome by providing callers with critical lifesaving instructions and by conducting a precise caller interrogation to gather specific information that will assist police officers in determining the appropriate deployment tactics.

In the event that an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incident happens in your area, it is important for you to understand the mindset and motives of the assailant(s), the objectives of the Protocol 136 Key Questions and associated Pre-Arrival Instructions (Protocol S), and the responses utilized by police officers.

The ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)

Typically, ACTIVE ASSAILANTS (SHOOTERS) feel disconnected from society as a whole; they often operate on the fringe of “normal” society. They may have a history of mental illness, but are usually functional or semi-functional members of society. The goal of the ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) is to inflict as much death and misery as possible prior to police intervention.

ACTIVE ASSAILANTS (SHOOTERS) often target large common areas where large numbers of victims will gather, such as cafeterias. They generally want to cause a spectacle to gain notoriety or to “send a message.” Traditionally, these killers find most of their victims in the open or hiding in plain sight under desks or in corners. They do not usually spend a great deal of time attempting to force entry into closed or locked rooms or offices as this slows them down and is contrary to their goal of inflicting a high body count.

Though they do occasionally have specific targets for their aggression, the ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) differs from a more conventional rage-driven killer in that they will kill or injure anyone in their vicinity while locating a more specific target. (For instance, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold had a “kill list” for the Columbine massacre; however, no one on that list was actually killed during the incident.)

Law Enforcement Response

In years past, the traditional method for dealing with ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incidents was for patrol officers to surround and contain the scene and then wait for specialized units, such as SWAT teams, to arrive and take over. The response of these specialized units could take hours, leaving perpetrators free to continue their rampage unfettered.

The modern police response to ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incidents has evolved from lessons learned through incidents such as Columbine, Colorado; Jonesboro, Arkansas; and Moses Lake, Washington. Tactics and training for first responders continue to be refined with additional information gathered from thorough evaluation of more recent events such as those at Virginia Tech University; Aurora, Colorado; and Newtown, Connecticut.

While the specific deployment tactics for an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incident may vary among different agencies, the underlying tactics and goals are the same: rapid deployment of patrol officers into the scene of the incident. The responders’ goal is to locate the killer(s) as quickly as possible and either contain

them or neutralize them. Patrol officers will generally deploy into the scene in teams of two to four officers. These teams will move quickly towards the sound of gunfire—or other sounds or evidence of an active assault—to close the distance to the offender. During periods of silence, they will move more slowly, clear rooms, and listen for the suspect.

CHIEF COMPLAINT SELECTION RULES FOR PROTOCOL 136

Protocol 136, Rule 1: Assault situations can have multiple victims. When the suspect **does not have unrestricted access** to additional victims, multiple victim assaults should be **handled on Protocol 106**.

The use of Protocol 136 requires the presence of two elements: 1) the use, or imminent use, of deadly physical force on victims, and 2) unrestricted access to additional victims. If **either** of these elements **is not** present, the situation is **not** an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incident and should **not** be handled using Protocol 136.

Protocol 136, Rule 3: An ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) situation may evolve into a barricaded subject or hostage situation. When this happens, the calltaker should **stay on Protocol 136** because the questions and instructions on this protocol address the situation better than any other PPDS Protocol.

Rules
1. ASSAULT situations in which a suspect does not have unrestricted access to additional victims should be handled on Protocol 106 .
2. Evacuating , if safe to do so, is the best action callers can take to save lives . However, if this is not possible , instructions for callers to go into a LOCKDOWN are critical .
3. Hostage situations developing in the course of an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) scenario should be handled on Protocol 136 .

ECHO DETERMINANT CODE SELECTION

The EPD must select and send a 136-E-1 Determinant Code for ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) situations during Case Entry. An early dispatch to field responders is critical to minimize the loss of life. As mentioned earlier, ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incidents usually occur suddenly and are often over in minutes. For this reason, getting police officers on scene as quickly as possible is paramount.

Although callers in ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) situations should always be considered to be in imminent danger, the 100-E-1 Determinant Code and the Caller In Danger Protocol do not appropriately address these situations. Use of the Caller In Danger Protocol does not provide adequate instructions for callers in these scenarios. For this reason, anytime a caller reports an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incident, the calltaker should use the 136-E-1 Determinant Code with the appropriate weapons suffix.

PRE-ARRIVAL PATHWAY

Unlike most other ECHO determinants, the pathway for ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) situations **does not** immediately direct the calltaker to Pre-Arrival Instructions (PAIs). For ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) situations, initiate a **136-E-1 response**, provide **Case Entry PDI-a**, and then go to **Protocol 136** immediately after completing Case Entry.

The link to PAIs appears within the Key Questions section of the ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) Protocol rather than directly from the DLS Links in Case Entry. This distinction is necessary to allow the EPD to address critical responder safety questions prior to beginning the Pre-Arrival Instructions.

POST-DISPATCH INSTRUCTIONS
a. (ECHO) I'm sending help to you now. Stay on the line , and I'll tell you exactly what to do next.

4. Can you safely evacuate/leave the building/area?	
Yes _____	S-1
No or Unknown _____	S-2

After obtaining critical safety information for responders, the Key Question “Can you safely **evacuate/leave** the building/area?” will help the EPD determine which set of instructions is appropriate for the caller.

If the caller indicates that they believe they can safely leave the area, the EPD will follow the link to **S-1** to provide **Evacuation** instructions. If the caller does not believe they can leave safely, or does not know, the EPD will follow the link to **S-2** to provide **LOCKDOWN** instructions.

2. **ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER)** situations **change rapidly**, so the EPD must consider and provide the **most appropriate advice** items in this protocol to **assist** the caller.
3. At some point, phone **contact** with the caller may be **lost**. **Pre-Arrival Instructions** need to be **given early** to **prepare the caller** as much as possible to **escape** or **defend** themselves.

In either case, Rules 2 and 3 on Protocol S remind the EPD to consider the most appropriate instructions according to a rapidly changing situation and to provide PAIs early in case phone contact is lost.

PROTOCOL 136 KEY QUESTIONS

The Key Questions on Protocol 136 are specifically designed to quickly collect the information responders need to address these unique incidents. This information can heavily influence the deployment tactics utilized by responders and law enforcement administration and will also benefit EMS and Fire agencies that may be assisting with the incident.

The intention of some of the Protocol 136 Key Questions is discussed below:

- **“What type of weapons are involved?”** The risks to responding officers are very different when the assailant is armed with a knife as opposed to a handgun. Similarly, the risks to responding officers are different when the assailant is armed with a handgun as opposed to a high-powered rifle.
- **“Does the suspect appear to be wearing a bulletproof vest or body armor?”** The presence of body armor on suspects will limit the effectiveness of responders’ weapons and may indicate that the assailant has a higher level of preparation and skill.
- **“Did you see the suspect carrying anything?”** This question is designed to elicit information regarding items such as backpacks, duffle bags, ammunition cans, etc. that may indicate explosives, chemical or biological weapons, extra ammunition, or other weapons that will hinder a law enforcement response.
- **“Did you hear the suspect saying anything?”** This question can help provide insight into the suspect’s motives, level of preparation, and intended target(s). For example, a suspect calling out an individual’s name may indicate that she or he has a specific target. In an office environment, police officers could determine where this individual works within a building and focus responding units accordingly. A suspect shouting a religious, racial, or political statement such as “Allahu Akbar!” or “White Power!” could be affiliated with a racist or terrorist group, which may indicate a higher level of training and access to weapons or explosives not usually encountered by police responders.

- **“When was the last time you heard shots fired?”** This question is designed to aid the calltaker in determining two key pieces of information: 1) the activity level of the assailant at the time of the call, and 2) which callers have the most up-to-date information because of their proximity to the assailant.

Note: *The National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) and the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) caution agencies from downgrading their responses based solely on information gathered from this question. The NTOA has provided the official statement at right.*

NTOA Statement

NTOA (National Tactical Officers Association) cautions against a change in police response based solely on a time delay of when shots were reportedly last heard. This time delay, by itself, does not negate the need for an immediate response. The perpetrator may be using, or preparing to use, other weapons (knives, IEDs, etc.), or her/his shots may not be audible. If the threat’s location is not known, officers should begin searching or rescue wounded victims. Officers should transition to a hostage/barricade situation, if necessary, based only on the totality of circumstances.

DETERMINANT SUFFIXES

A new weapons suffix code has been added to the existing codes of **C, E, G, K** and **O**. The new suffix of **“M”** for **Multiple weapon types** was added to address situations in which an assailant may be utilizing more than one weapon.

Previously, if an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) were known to have both a gun and an explosive device, the EPD would have to decide which suffix to add to the Determinant Code, which resulted in providing incomplete, inaccurate information to responders. This additional suffix eliminates this issue for both the EPD and responders.

When weapons information is known during Case Entry, cardset users may be able to add a weapons suffix at the point of initial dispatch of the call. ProQA® users will notice that ProQA automatically reconfigures the code when weapons information is gathered in response to Key Question 1.

➔ Determinant Suffixes

The suffix codes help to delineate the specific type of weapon:

- C** = Club
- E** = Explosive
- G** = Gun
- K** = Knife
- M** = Multiple weapon types
- O** = Other

PRE-ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS—PROTOCOL S

The objective of the Pre-Arrival Instructions (PAIs) on Protocol S is to remove potential victims from the immediate area through actual evacuation or LOCKDOWN (removing them from plain sight).

Evacuation Instructions: The evacuation instructions are intended to help the caller evacuate the area as safely and as efficiently as possible. They are designed to prevent potentially panicked callers from making the situation worse for themselves or responders, as discussed below:

- **“Take an evacuation path that’s away from the suspect.”** The shortest route out of the building or area may not be the safest. A panicked caller may not consider this without a clear reminder from the EPD.
- **“Do not attempt to move wounded people.”** Callers often desire to quickly remove as many additional victims from the location as possible. Although this may be a noble desire, attempting to move wounded individuals slows the evacuation and puts the caller and others at further risk. Additionally, moving wounded people may cause them additional injury.

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1 Evacuation	Academy Policy	Rules
<p>Get out of the building/area even if others won't follow. Help others escape, if possible. Take an evacuation path that's away from the suspect. Warn others of the situation as you escape. Do not attempt to move wounded people. Do not rush towards officers, keep your hands visible at all times, and follow all of their commands. Update police with the suspect's description and location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you take the phone with you? <p style="text-align: right; background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 2px;">Yes → Return to sequence</p> <p>(No) Call us back from a safe location, if possible.</p> <p style="text-align: right; background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 2px;">End</p>	<p>These instructions were developed with the assistance of the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA).</p> <p>The National Academy of EPD considers situations necessitating the provision of these instructions to be an extremely High Risk-Inherent Situation Case (HIRISC), and believes that the trained EPD (or their agency), making a good-faith attempt to provide these instructions, should not be held responsible for any bad outcomes. This should not be considered a legal interpretation, but a strong official opinion of the Council of Standards and Board of Trustees of the NAEPD.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ASSAULT situations in which a suspect does not have unrestricted access to additional victims are not ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incidents. 2. ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) situations change rapidly, so the EPD must consider and provide the most appropriate advice items in this protocol to assist the caller. 3. At some point, phone contact with the caller may be lost. Pre-Arrival Instructions need to be given early to prepare the caller as much as possible to escape or defend themselves.
2 LOCKDOWN		
<p>Gather those around you and go to the nearest room with a locking door. Do not leave your current location if you feel the suspect will see or find you. Once you're inside, lock the door and barricade it with heavy objects. Try to prevent being seen. If you can, turn off the lights and close the drapes or blinds to cover any windows. Sit or lie on the floor next to the wall with the door and be as quiet as possible. Do not answer or open the door for anyone. If you are found and unable to get away, be aggressive and prepared to fight for your life by using any items you can as weapons. Throw objects, yell, and continue to defend yourself.</p> <p style="text-align: right; background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 2px;">Return to sequence</p>		

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- **“Do not rush towards officers, keep your hands visible at all times, and follow all of their commands.”** This essential instruction is designed to aid police responders during their initial entry into the incident scene. Panicked callers have a tendency to swarm to responders as they see them as a “safe zone.” However, this swarming activity hinders the responders’ ability to appropriately assess and address possible threats. It can also put victims in more danger as they may get caught in the line of fire aimed at entering responders.

LOCKDOWN Instructions: When callers are unable to safely evacuate, their next best option is to remove themselves from plain sight and secure themselves in an area that is more difficult for an assailant to target. This response is commonly referred to as LOCKDOWN. LOCKDOWN procedures are generally taught and implemented in schools and workplaces, but are rarely taught to the general public. The concepts are simple and can be very effective at limiting the loss of life during an ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) incident. They are further discussed below:

- **“Gather those around you and go to the nearest room with a locking door.”** Securing potential victims in a room with a locking door (or a door that can be barricaded) removes them from plain sight and provides a secondary benefit of keeping the assailant(s) in the hallways and common areas, which makes it easier for responders to find them.
- **“Sit or lie on the floor next to the wall with the door.”** For individuals in a LOCKDOWN, this simple action minimizes the danger of bullets fired through the door of the room.

- **“If you are found and unable to get away, be aggressive and prepared to fight for your life by using any items you can as weapons.”** It is important to mentally prepare callers for the fact that they may need to fight for their life. These instructions suggest actions they can take if they are found, which can help put them into an action mindset, rather than a victim mindset.



NATIONAL TACTICAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (NTOA)

Protocol 136 and the associated Pre-Arrival Instructions were developed with the important assistance of the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA). The NTOA is a premiere police tactical training organization and is a recognized leader in ACTIVE ASSAILANT (SHOOTER) response training for police officers. Their training and expertise is utilized by police agencies around the world, as well as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

United Kingdom, Irish, Australian, New Zealand, Botswanan, and South African agencies please note: North American English spelling and format has been used throughout for printing efficiency purposes.

IAED World Headquarters
110 S. Regent Street, Suite 800
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111, USA
USA/Canada toll-free: (800) 960-6236
Int'l/Local: (801) 359-6916
Fax: (801) 359-0996
www.emergencydispatch.org

