



**Gassed:** The chemical released in the theater is suspected to be a poison gas.



**Armed and ready:** Farmington Hills Police respond to the incident.



**Casualties:** A secondary explosion outside the auditorium, designed to distract police, caused additional injuries.

## Disaster from page A1

decontamination area, where they were given three separate showers to remove contaminants.

Shadd Whitehead, training coordinator for the Livonia Fire Department, explained the process.

First, victims are hosed down while fully clothed. Next, they strip and take two more showers, including one with antibacterial soap. Workers administering the showers wore protective suits to prevent cross contamination.

The mock victims got to wear swimsuits for the last two showers, but real victims have to give up all their clothes, Whitehead said. Those clothes wind up being destroyed.

**In real life**  
"In real life they come out of the showers naked." Real victims are given cloth gowns to wear until they can get other clothing.

In Livonia, there have been plenty of real-life hazardous materials emergencies. The McGean-Robco Co., which manufactures industrial cleaning chemicals, has had three incidents in the past 10 years — one in the past three weeks, said Don Unruh, a Livonia firefighter/paramedic.

"We're no strangers to these incidents," Unruh said.

**Victims**  
Mock victim David Mojica of Clarkston, who has been working for American Medical Response Ambulance for a couple months, said he enjoyed the experience, despite having nearly died.

His instructions as a mock victim were to become dizzy and lightheaded and experience difficulty in breathing aggravated by a history of asthma.

"In real life, I probably would have died," Mojica said.

Another victim, Wendi Mancuso, also of Clarkston, is a student at Oakland Community College's EMT Academy. She wasn't scared off from her prospective career.

"It was a great learning experience," Mancuso said. "I've never seen anything like this."

Sgt. Don Ostrowski with the Troy Police Department, said it's important to practice emergency response, especially in large cities such as Troy.

"In Troy, we have a lot of world headquarters," Ostrowski said, mentioning Kmart and Delphi, among others. "There are a lot of possible (terrorist) targets."

The annual Woodward Dream Cruise is another public event that might draw terrorist attention, he added.

Other communities represented at the exercise were Canton, Livonia, Westland, Dearborn Heights, Dearborn, Northville Township, Plymouth, Garden City, Redford, Romulus, Wayne and Inkster — all part of the Western Wayne Hazardous Materials Response Team.

Kisch said he was pleased with how the exercise played out.

"I thought it went great," Kisch said, looking at his watch. "We're ahead of schedule — it went better than we planned."

## Drill victims helped Botsford emergency staff train for disaster

BY KEVIN BROWN  
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The EMS vans, with lights flashing, made their way up the drive to Botsford Hospital as they do every day.

But the radio said patients in these vans may have been contaminated in an explosion. Emergency room staff would have to determine if patients had been contaminated, the chemical involved, and how to decontaminate them to keep other hospital patients and staff safe from potential chemical exposure.

Roughly 90 minutes after the Weapons of Mass Destruction exercise had opened at the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus, the focus shifted to emergency room staff at Botsford Hospital and Huron Valley Hospital.

At Botsford, Dr. David Walters, emergency department director, stood near the emer-

gency room administrative desk. Dressed in a white lab coat, Walters peered out the automatic sliding glass doors that open to the ambulance bay. Behind him milled nurses in blue or green scrubs and some administrative staff in purple.

"As an organization it's important to practice protocols involving a case of mass casualties," Walters said. Further, drills test the hospital's existing disaster plan, and Walters said improvements will be discussed in a critique that would follow the exercise.

Because the radio call said some patients were likely contaminated, four hospital staff members donned white containment suits topped off with masks. A security chief spread a plastic tarp on pavement to the side of the emergency entrance. Orange cones were placed around the area. A hose was produced, to wash down contaminated victims.

"The tarp is to collect whatever water they drain off," explained Dr. Maureen Nelson. She was in charge of primary triage — the sorting out of where accident victims go for treatment, after they arrive.

While the first word was that Botsford would have as many as 30 emergency patients, the number dropped to 16. In a scenario where all 16 were severely traumatized, Walters said elective surgeries scheduled outside the emergency department could be delayed, so more staff could attend to emergency patients.

While the work of Botsford staff to handle the disaster drill appeared to follow protocol, Public Relations Coordinator Nancy Dumas revealed one item that will require some adjusting: One staff member reported a battery on one of six portable computers used in the exercise was low, and that hindered the unit's operation.

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