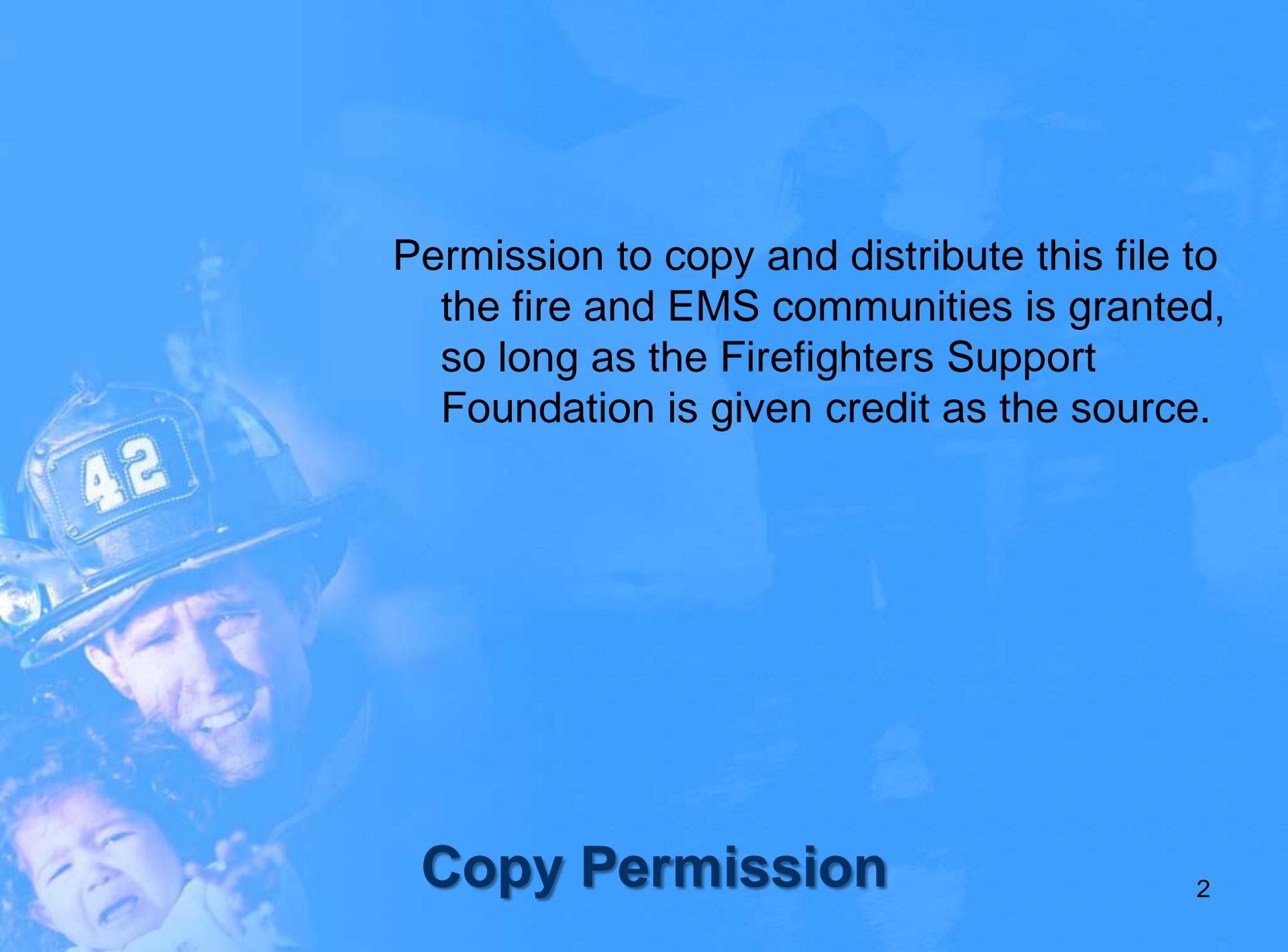


# *Fire/EMS Response to Civil Unrest and Violent Protest Situations*

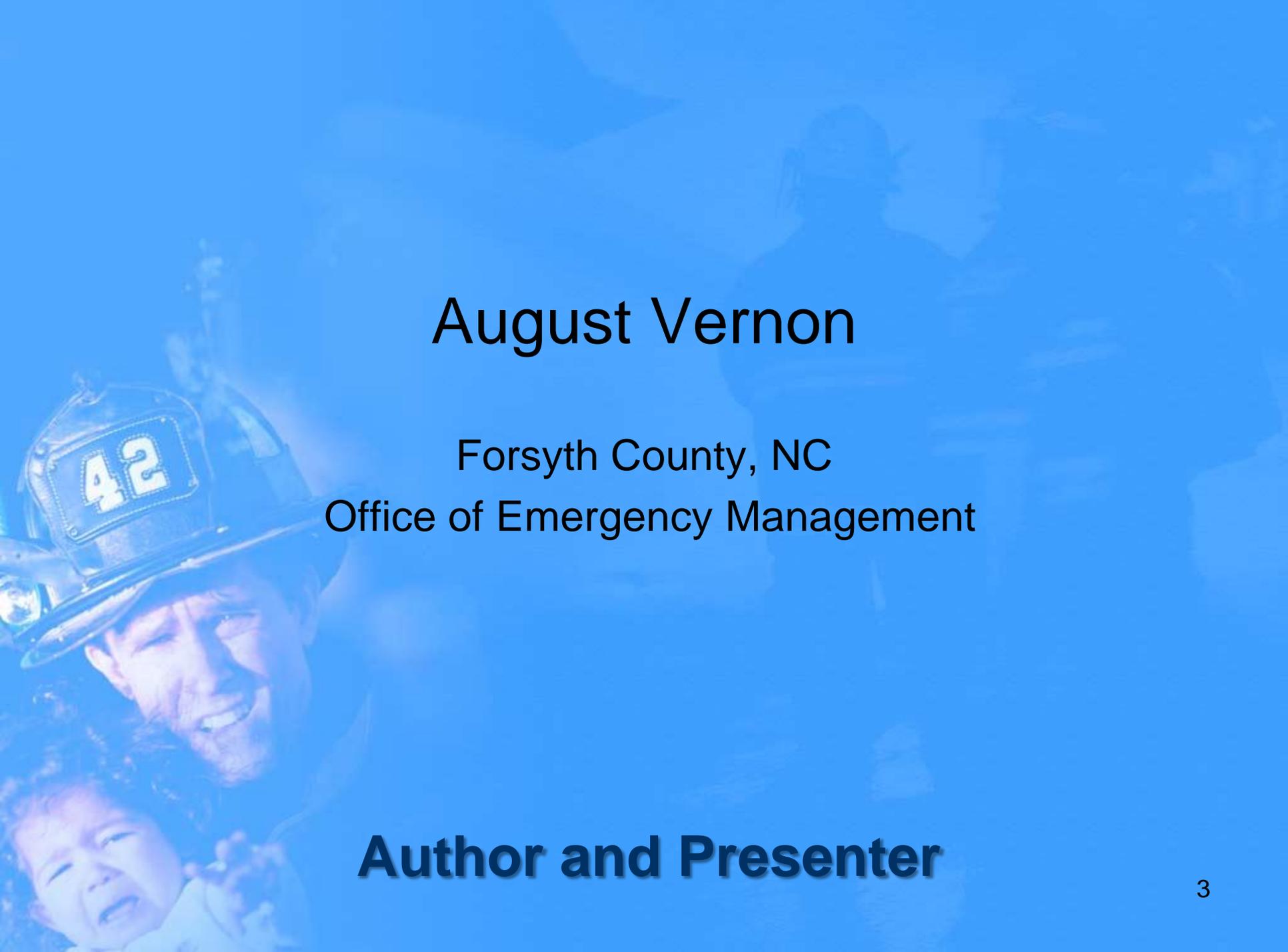
*Civil Unrest v1.0*

**Firefighters Support Foundation**

A firefighter wearing a helmet with the number 42, smiling and holding a crying child. The background is a blurred scene of a fire scene with other firefighters.

Permission to copy and distribute this file to the fire and EMS communities is granted, so long as the Firefighters Support Foundation is given credit as the source.

**Copy Permission**



# August Vernon

Forsyth County, NC  
Office of Emergency Management

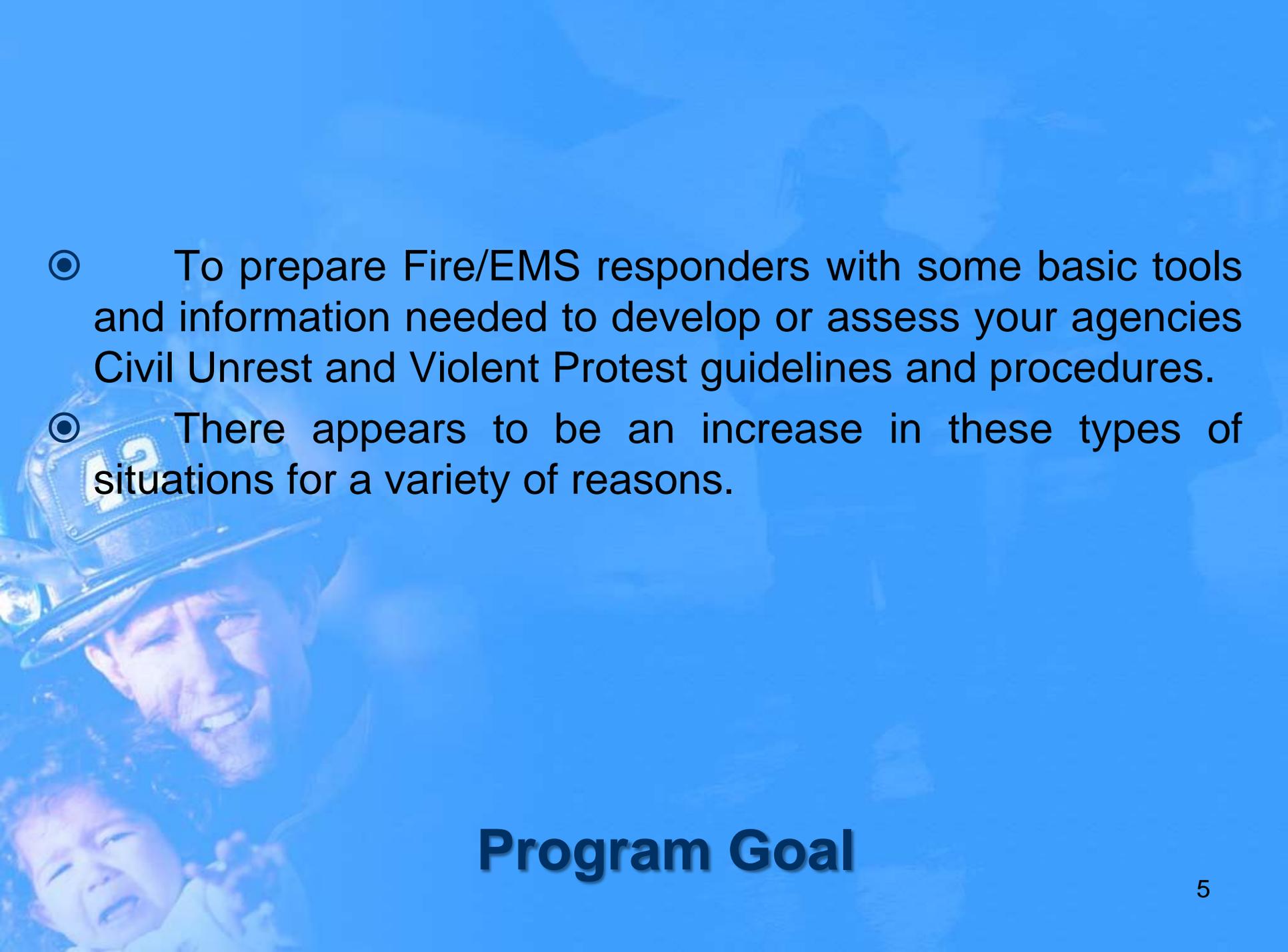
**Author and Presenter**



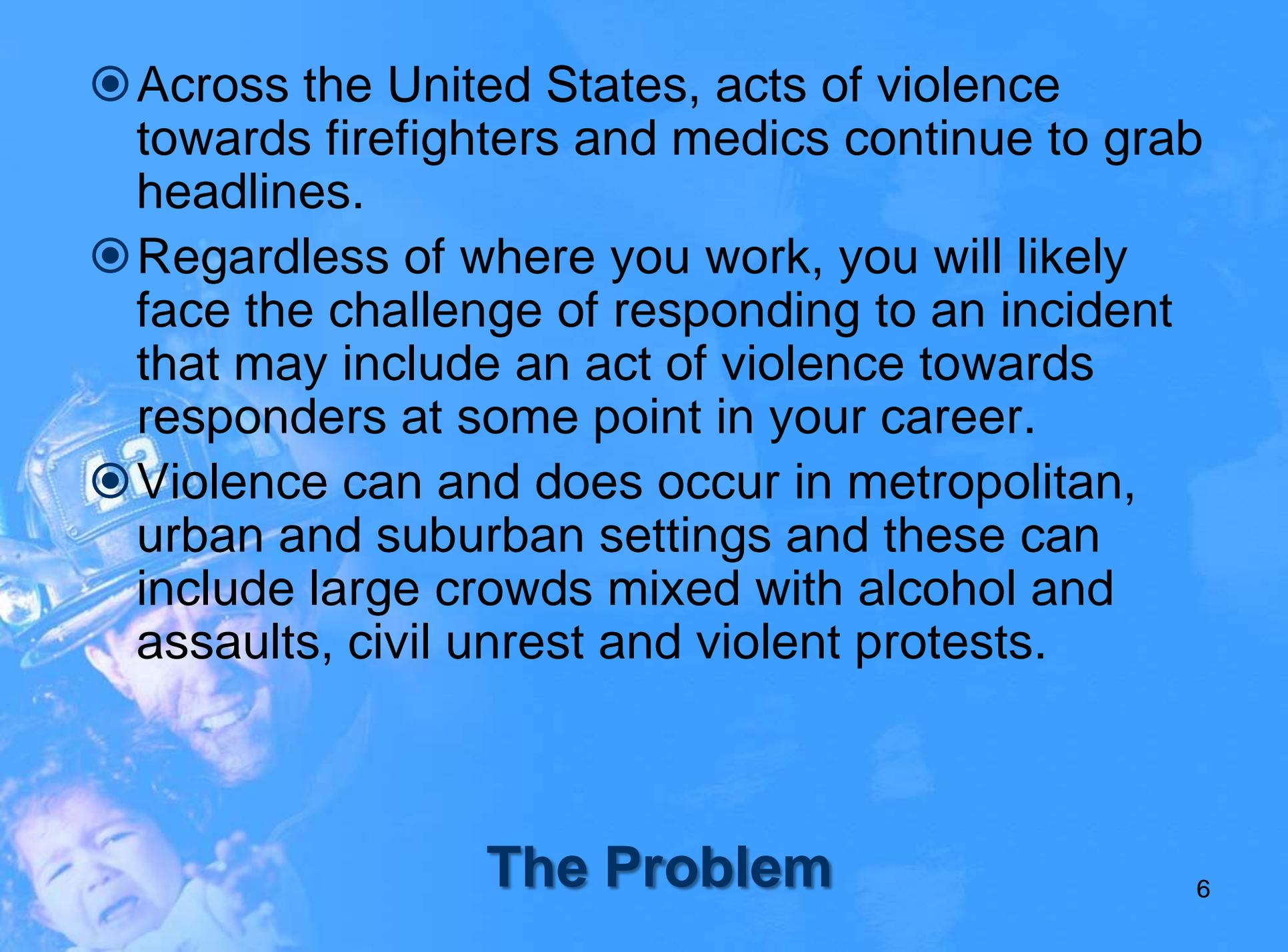
August Vernon is also the author of:  
*First Responder Critical Incident Guide*

Red Hat Publishing  
[www.redhatpub.com](http://www.redhatpub.com)

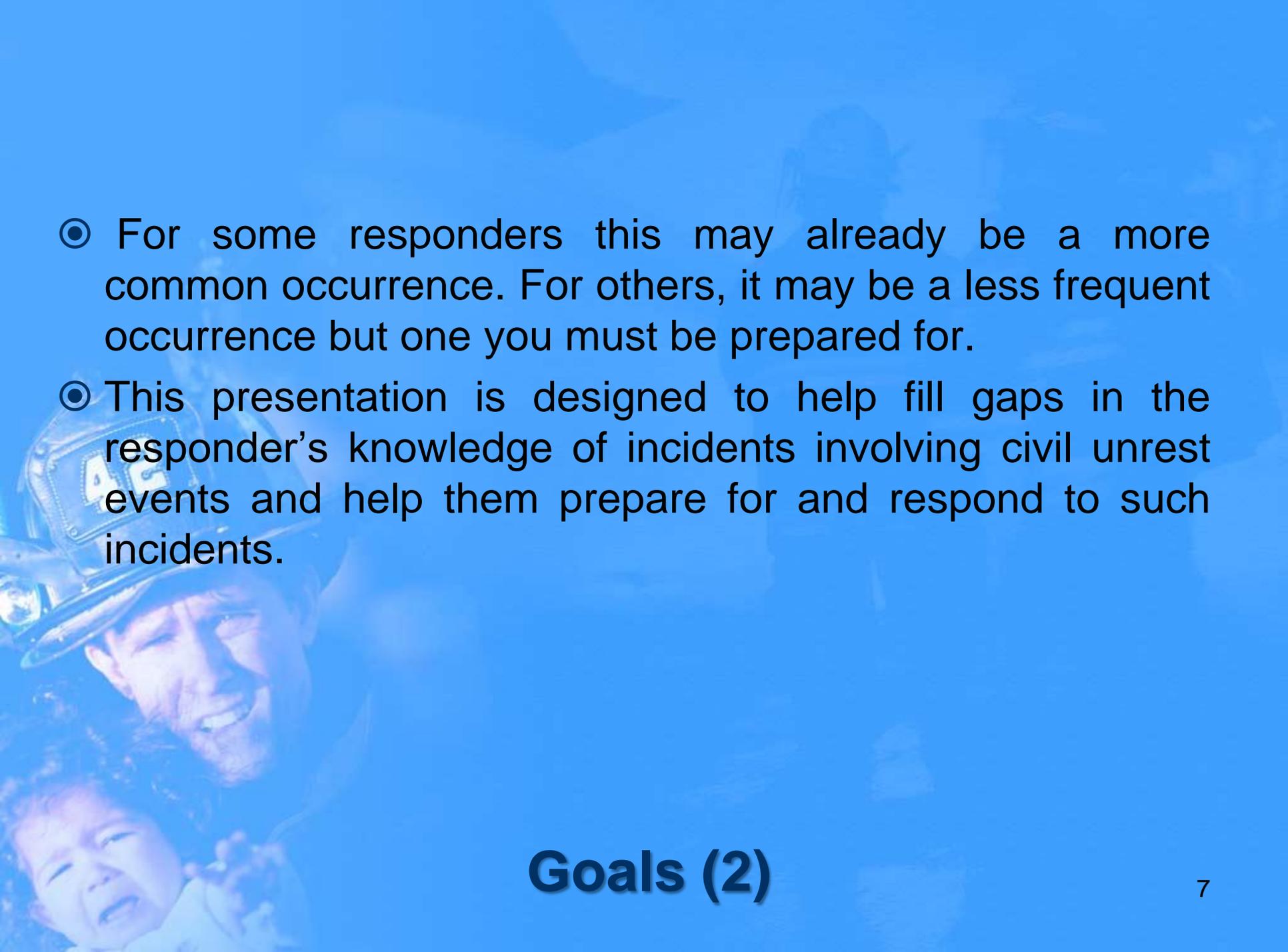
**The Author**

- 
- ◎ To prepare Fire/EMS responders with some basic tools and information needed to develop or assess your agencies Civil Unrest and Violent Protest guidelines and procedures.
  - ◎ There appears to be an increase in these types of situations for a variety of reasons.

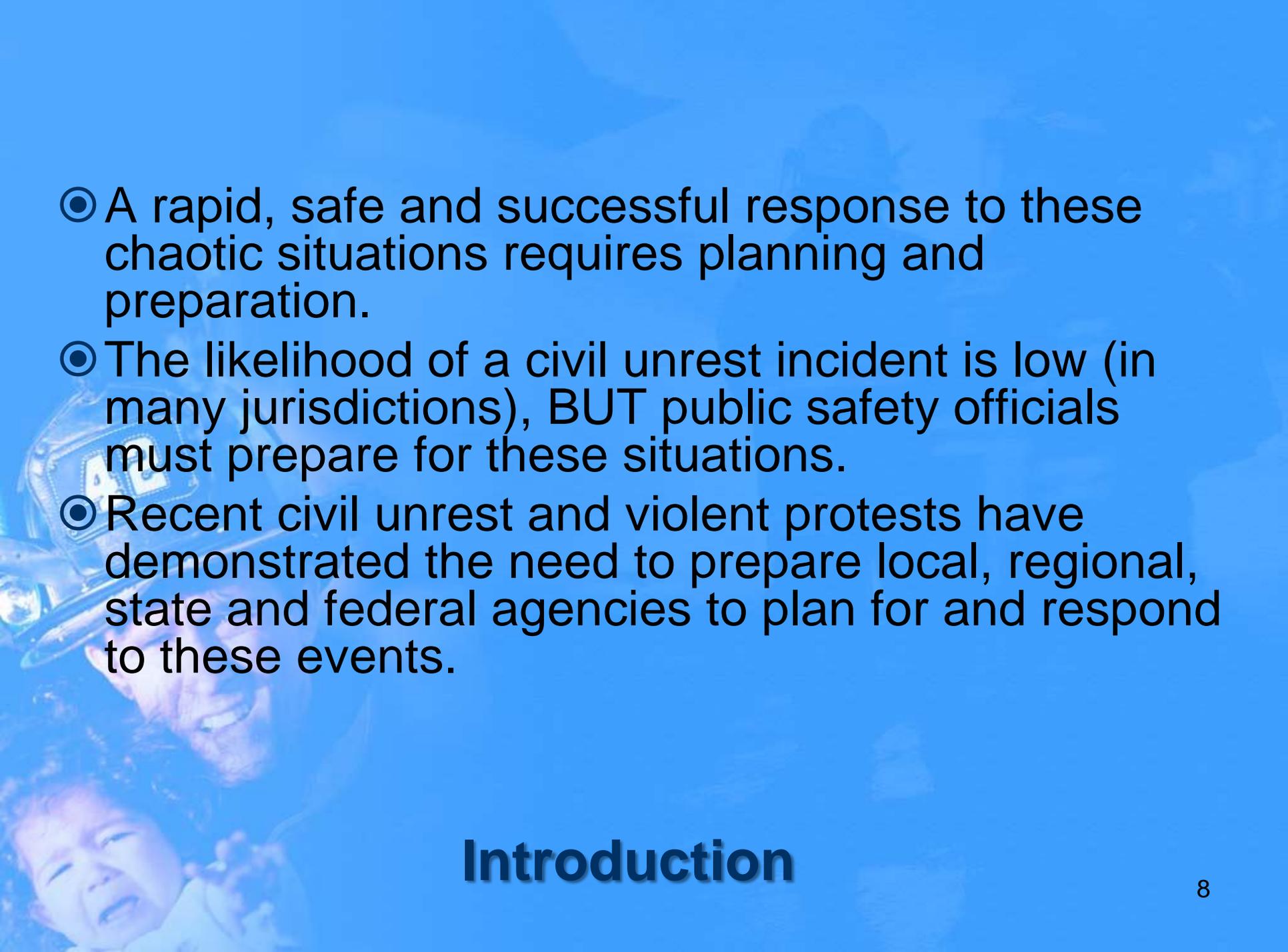
## **Program Goal**

- 
- A firefighter wearing a helmet with the number '23' on it is smiling and holding a young child who is crying. The background is a solid blue color.
- ◎ Across the United States, acts of violence towards firefighters and medics continue to grab headlines.
  - ◎ Regardless of where you work, you will likely face the challenge of responding to an incident that may include an act of violence towards responders at some point in your career.
  - ◎ Violence can and does occur in metropolitan, urban and suburban settings and these can include large crowds mixed with alcohol and assaults, civil unrest and violent protests.

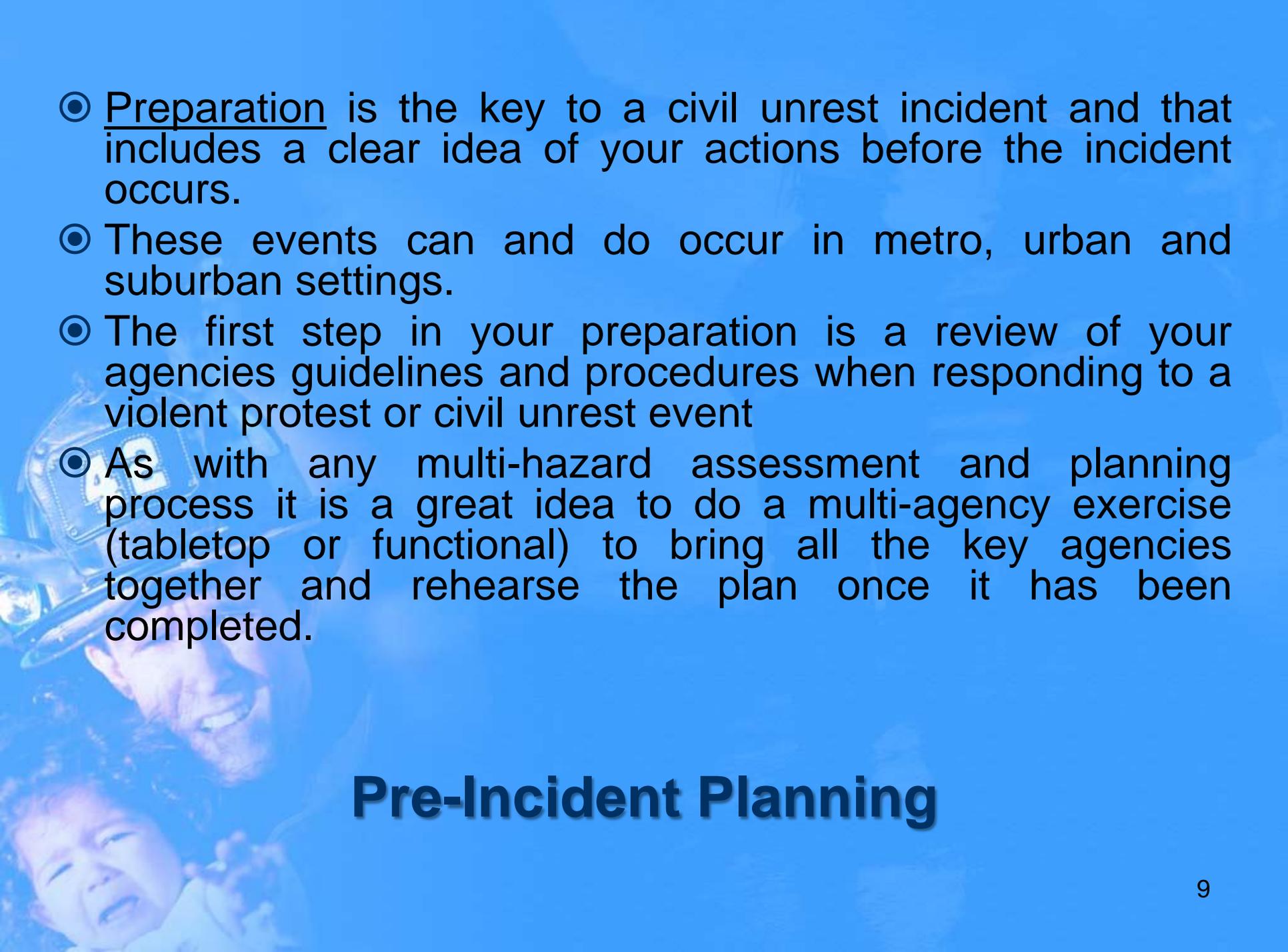
## **The Problem**

- 
- A firefighter in a helmet and uniform is smiling while holding a crying child. The background is a blurred scene of an emergency response.
- ⦿ For some responders this may already be a more common occurrence. For others, it may be a less frequent occurrence but one you must be prepared for.
  - ⦿ This presentation is designed to help fill gaps in the responder's knowledge of incidents involving civil unrest events and help them prepare for and respond to such incidents.

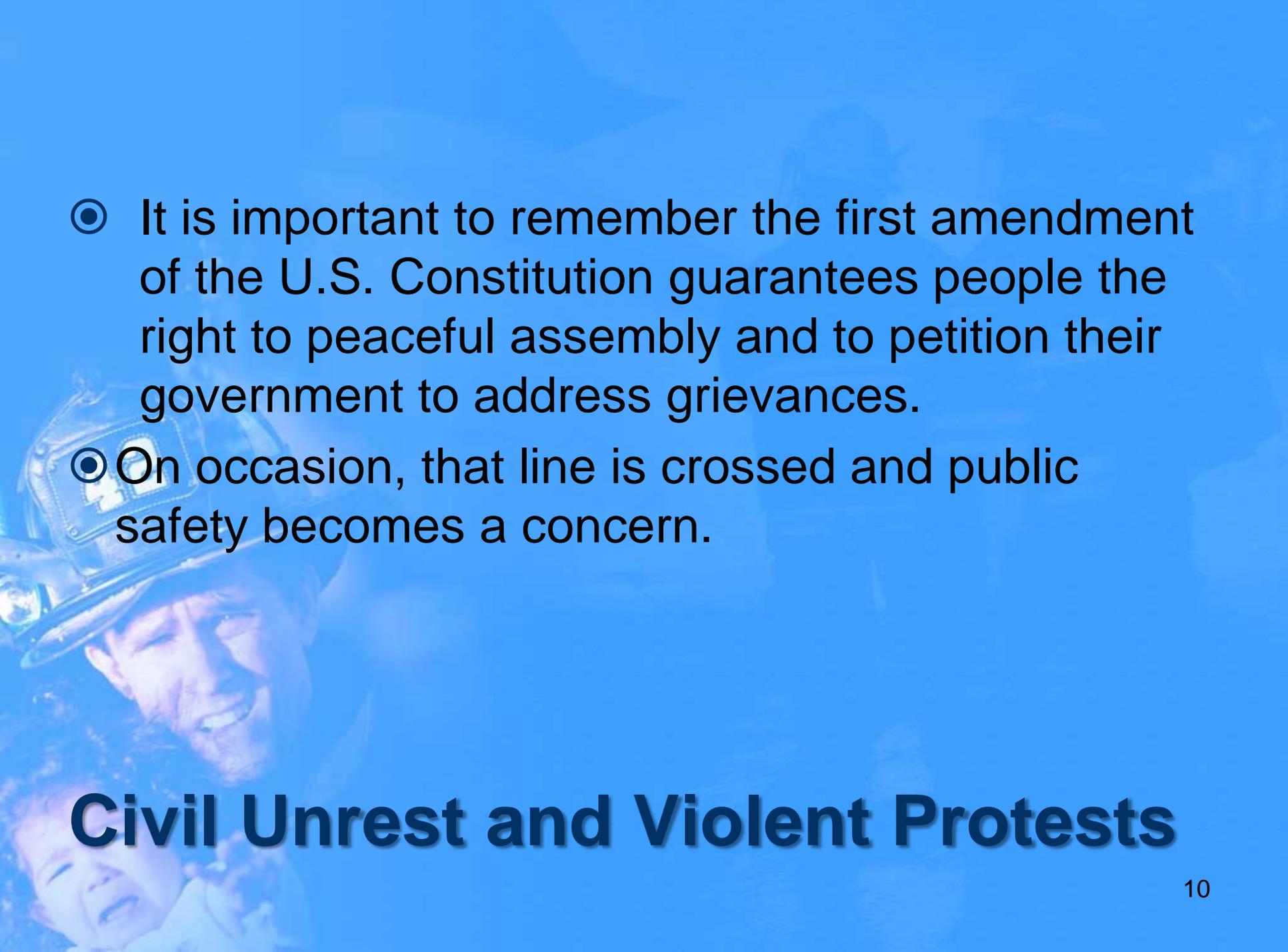
## Goals (2)

- 
- A firefighter in a helmet and uniform is smiling while holding a crying child. The background is a solid blue color.
- ◎ A rapid, safe and successful response to these chaotic situations requires planning and preparation.
  - ◎ The likelihood of a civil unrest incident is low (in many jurisdictions), BUT public safety officials must prepare for these situations.
  - ◎ Recent civil unrest and violent protests have demonstrated the need to prepare local, regional, state and federal agencies to plan for and respond to these events.

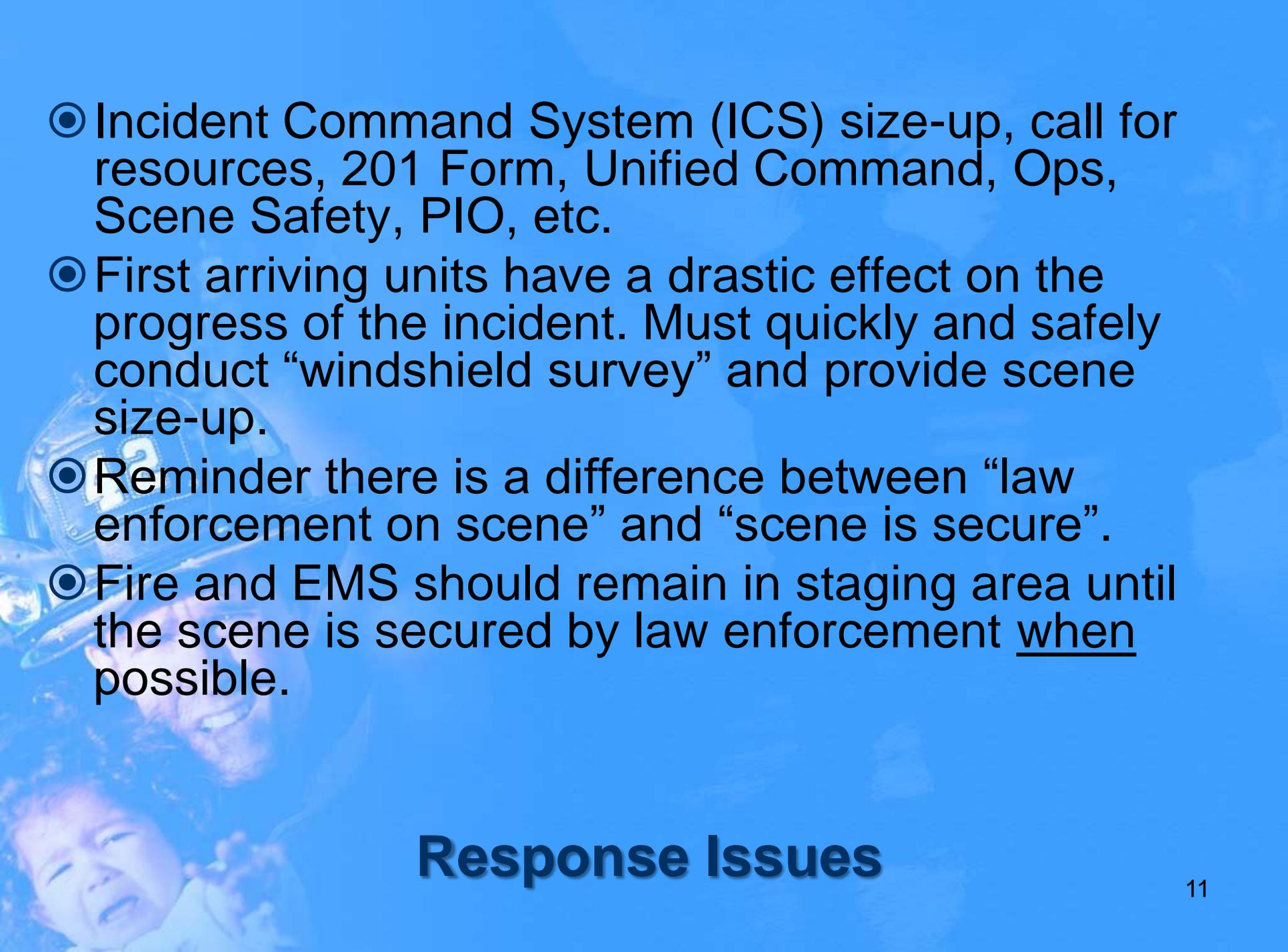
## Introduction

- 
- ◎ Preparation is the key to a civil unrest incident and that includes a clear idea of your actions before the incident occurs.
  - ◎ These events can and do occur in metro, urban and suburban settings.
  - ◎ The first step in your preparation is a review of your agencies guidelines and procedures when responding to a violent protest or civil unrest event
  - ◎ As with any multi-hazard assessment and planning process it is a great idea to do a multi-agency exercise (tabletop or functional) to bring all the key agencies together and rehearse the plan once it has been completed.

## **Pre-Incident Planning**

- 
- ◎ It is important to remember the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees people the right to peaceful assembly and to petition their government to address grievances.
  - ◎ On occasion, that line is crossed and public safety becomes a concern.

## **Civil Unrest and Violent Protests**

- 
- ◎ Incident Command System (ICS) size-up, call for resources, 201 Form, Unified Command, Ops, Scene Safety, PIO, etc.
  - ◎ First arriving units have a drastic effect on the progress of the incident. Must quickly and safely conduct “windshield survey” and provide scene size-up.
  - ◎ Reminder there is a difference between “law enforcement on scene” and “scene is secure”.
  - ◎ Fire and EMS should remain in staging area until the scene is secured by law enforcement when possible.

## Response Issues



- ◎ **ORGANIZED**

WTO (World Trade Organization), IMF (International Monetary Fund), RNC (Republican National Committee), DNC (Democratic National Committee), G8 Summit, Political conventions and events.

- ◎ **SPORADIC**

College Campuses, Sports Events, Street Celebrations (Mardi Gras, Spring Break, Concerts, etc.)

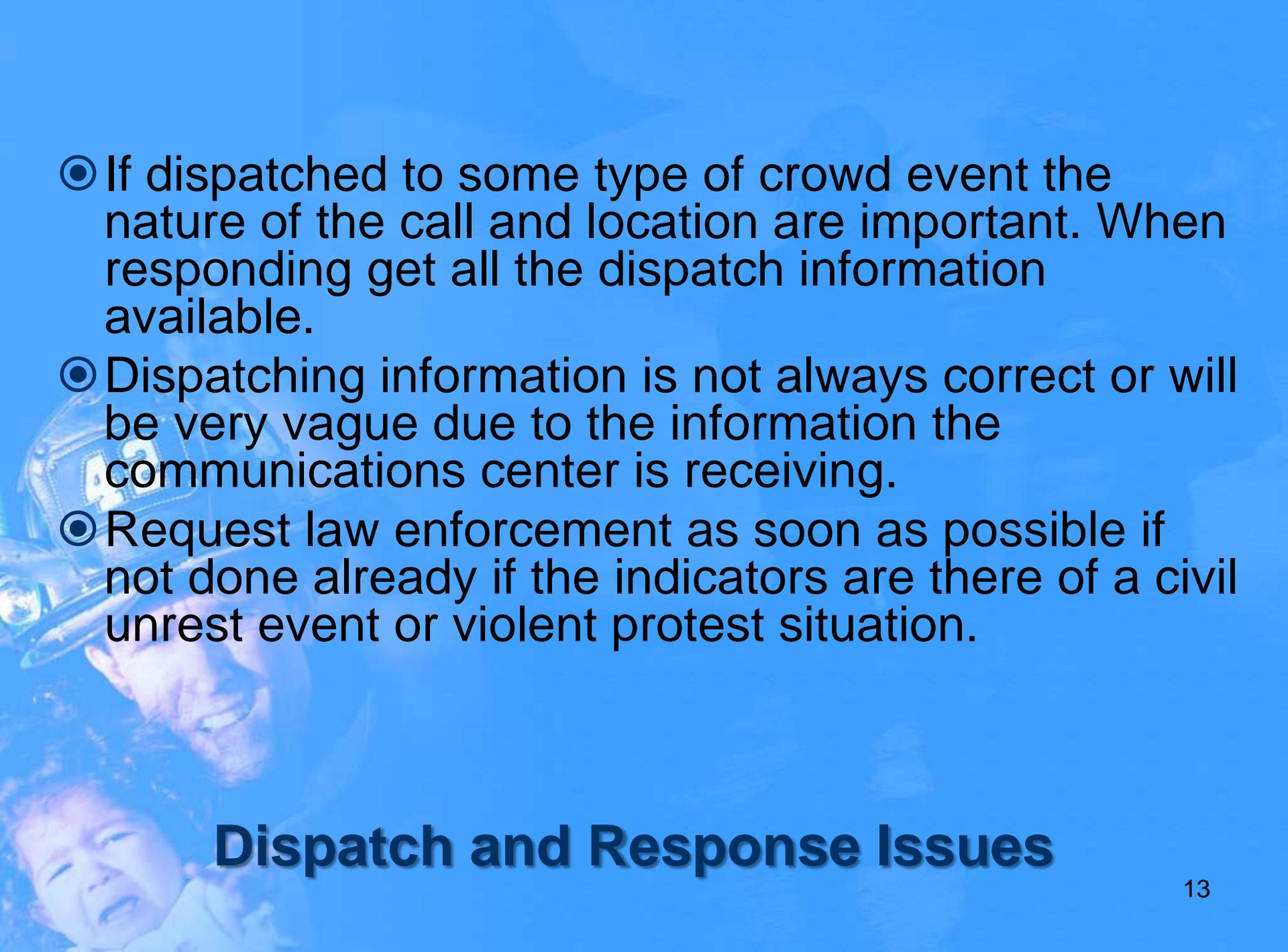
- ◎ **RACIAL**

LA Riots, Cincinnati, Benton Harbor, etc.

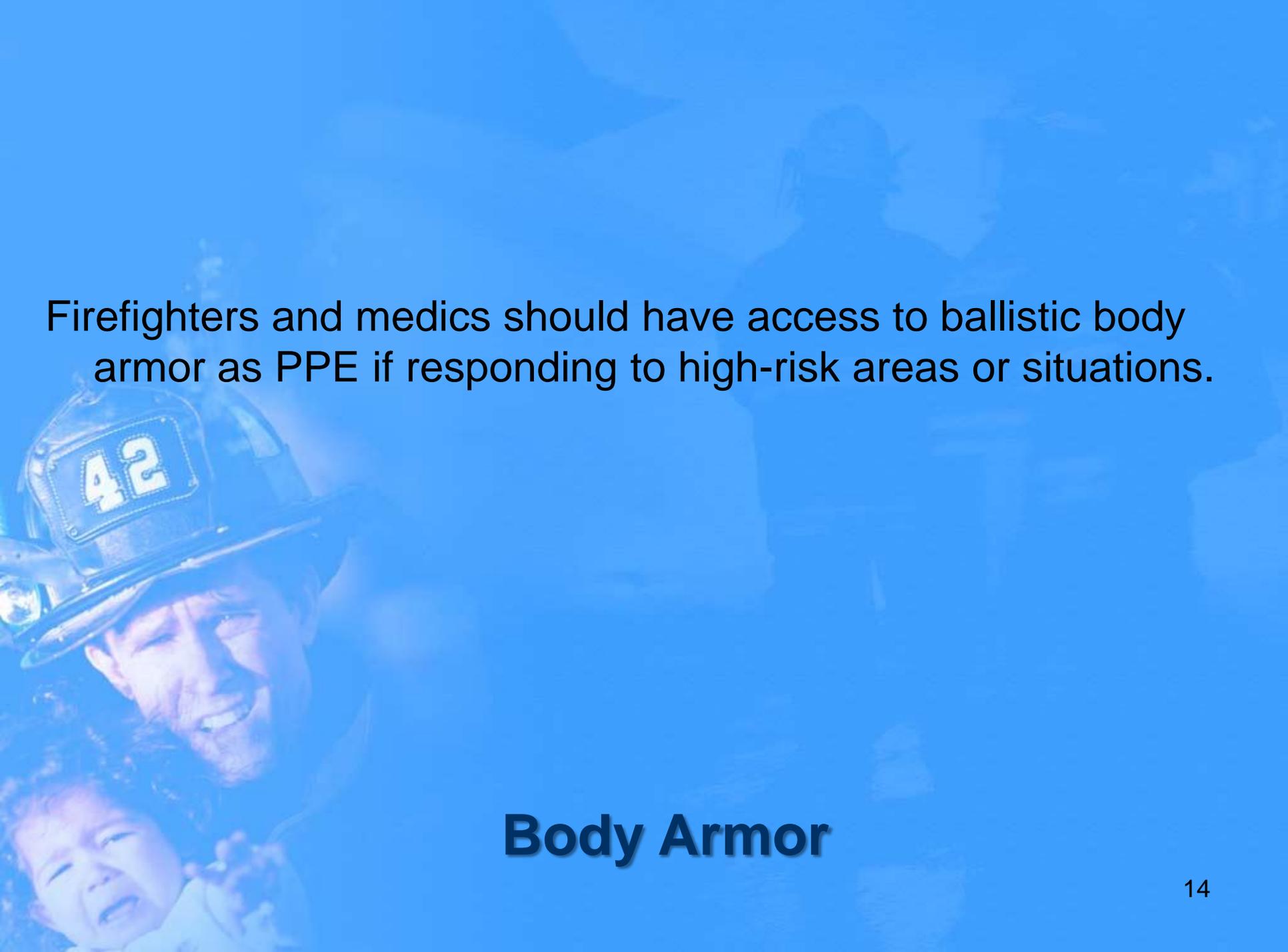
- ◎ **CORRECTIONAL FACILITY**

Prisons and Jails

## Types of Events

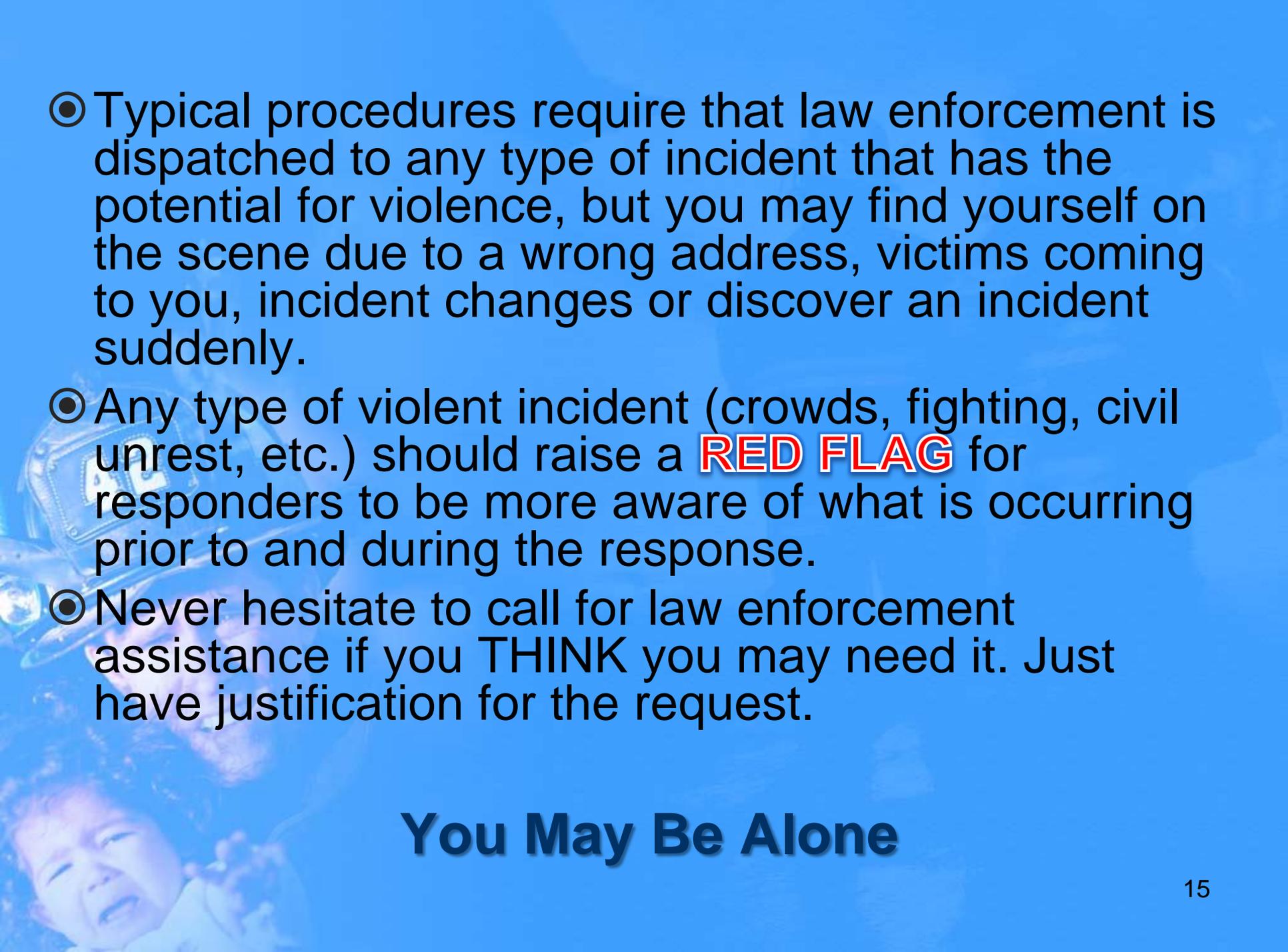
- 
- ◎ If dispatched to some type of crowd event the nature of the call and location are important. When responding get all the dispatch information available.
  - ◎ Dispatching information is not always correct or will be very vague due to the information the communications center is receiving.
  - ◎ Request law enforcement as soon as possible if not done already if the indicators are there of a civil unrest event or violent protest situation.

## **Dispatch and Response Issues**

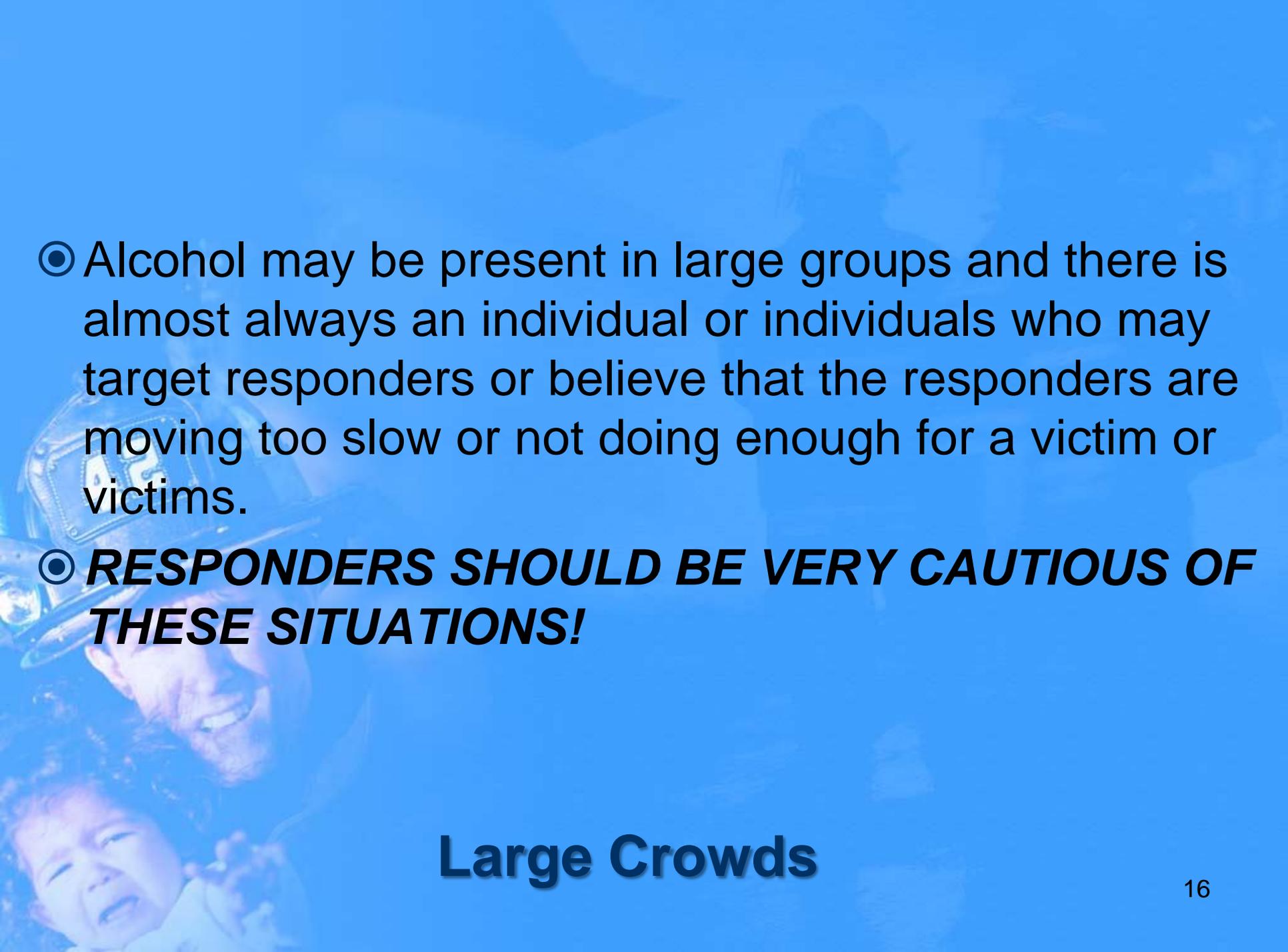


Firefighters and medics should have access to ballistic body armor as PPE if responding to high-risk areas or situations.

## **Body Armor**

- 
- ◎ Typical procedures require that law enforcement is dispatched to any type of incident that has the potential for violence, but you may find yourself on the scene due to a wrong address, victims coming to you, incident changes or discover an incident suddenly.
  - ◎ Any type of violent incident (crowds, fighting, civil unrest, etc.) should raise a **RED FLAG** for responders to be more aware of what is occurring prior to and during the response.
  - ◎ Never hesitate to call for law enforcement assistance if you **THINK** you may need it. Just have justification for the request.

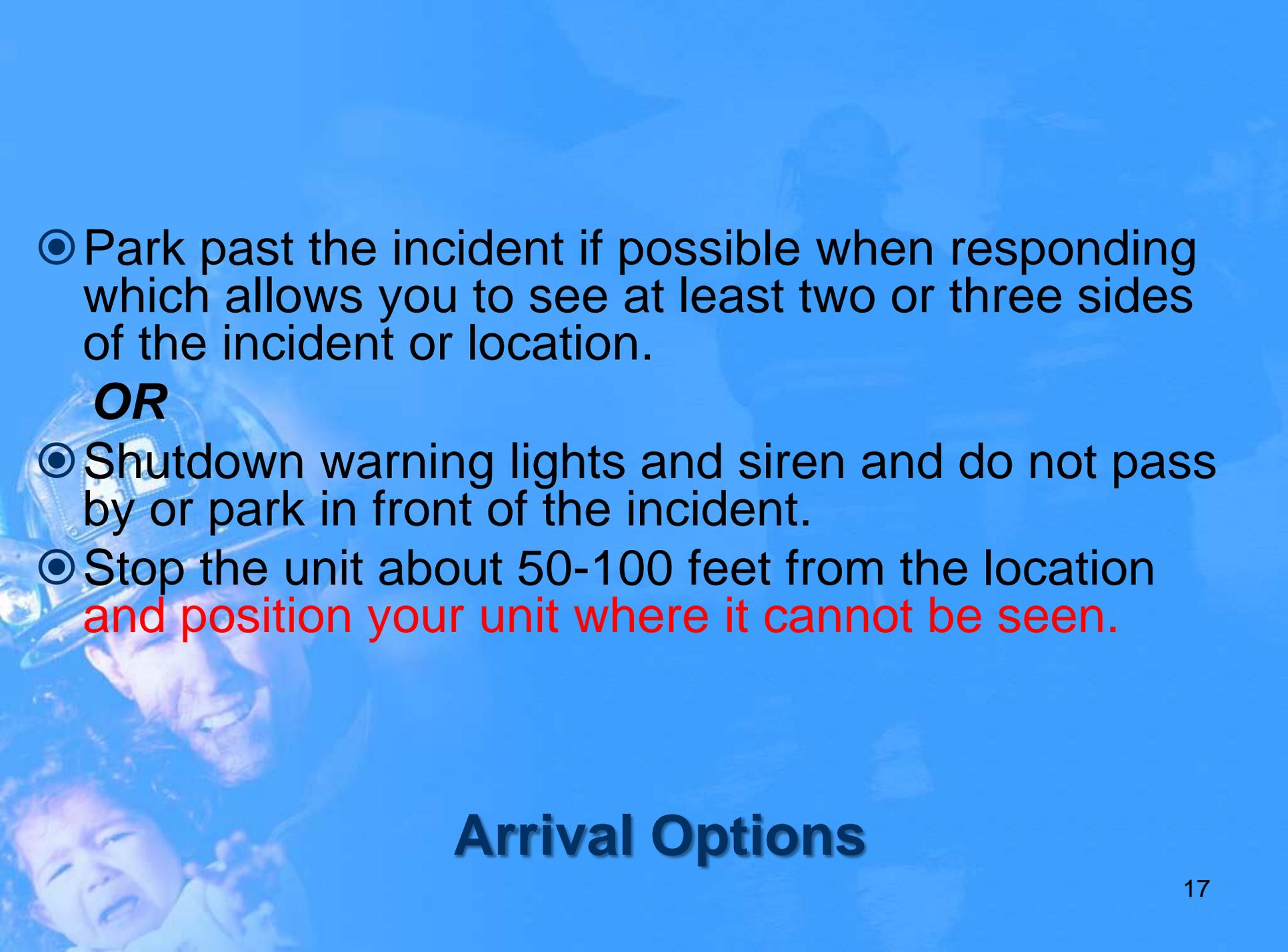
**You May Be Alone**



© Alcohol may be present in large groups and there is almost always an individual or individuals who may target responders or believe that the responders are moving too slow or not doing enough for a victim or victims.

© ***RESPONDERS SHOULD BE VERY CAUTIOUS OF THESE SITUATIONS!***

**Large Crowds**



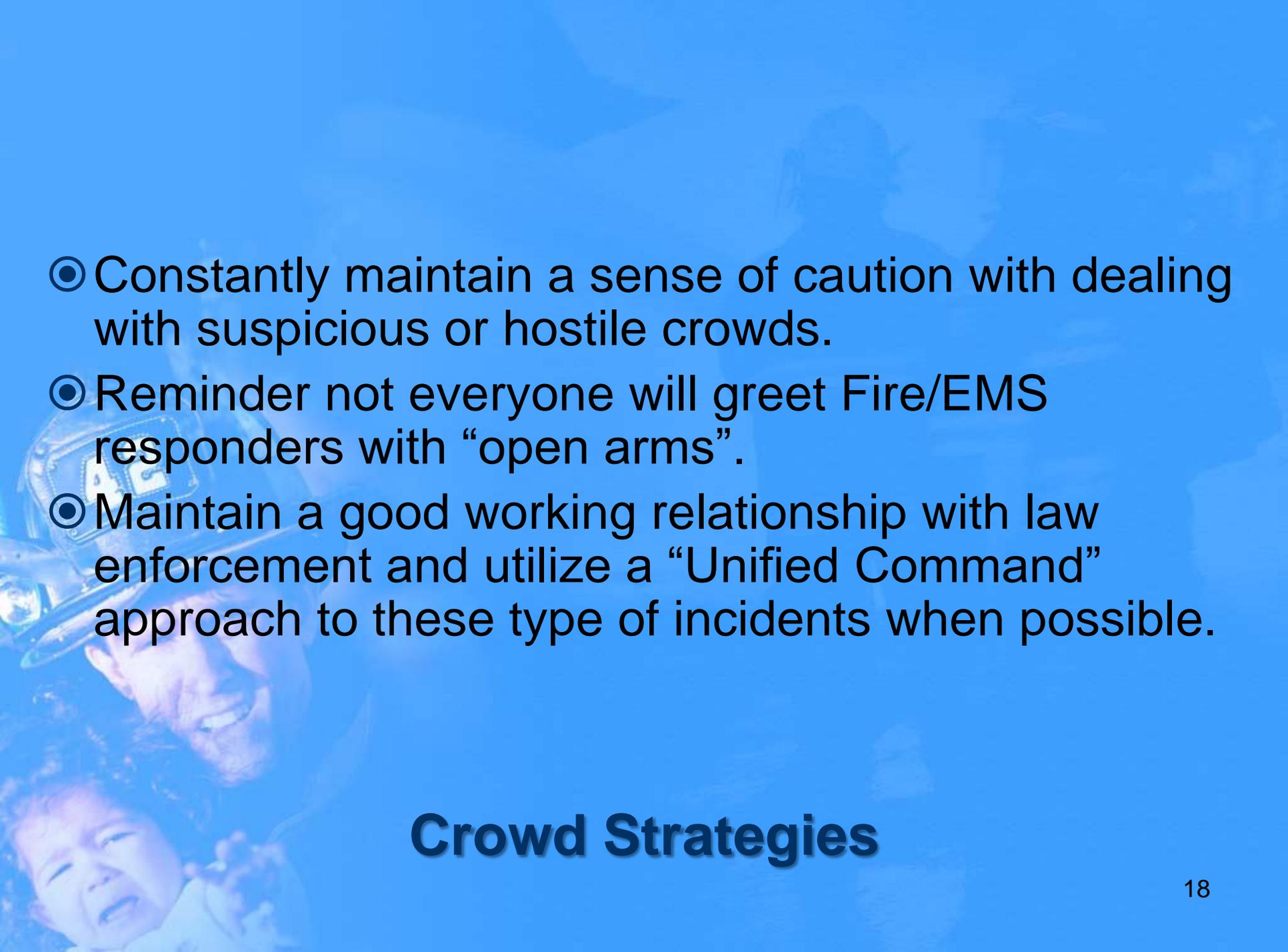
⦿ Park past the incident if possible when responding which allows you to see at least two or three sides of the incident or location.

**OR**

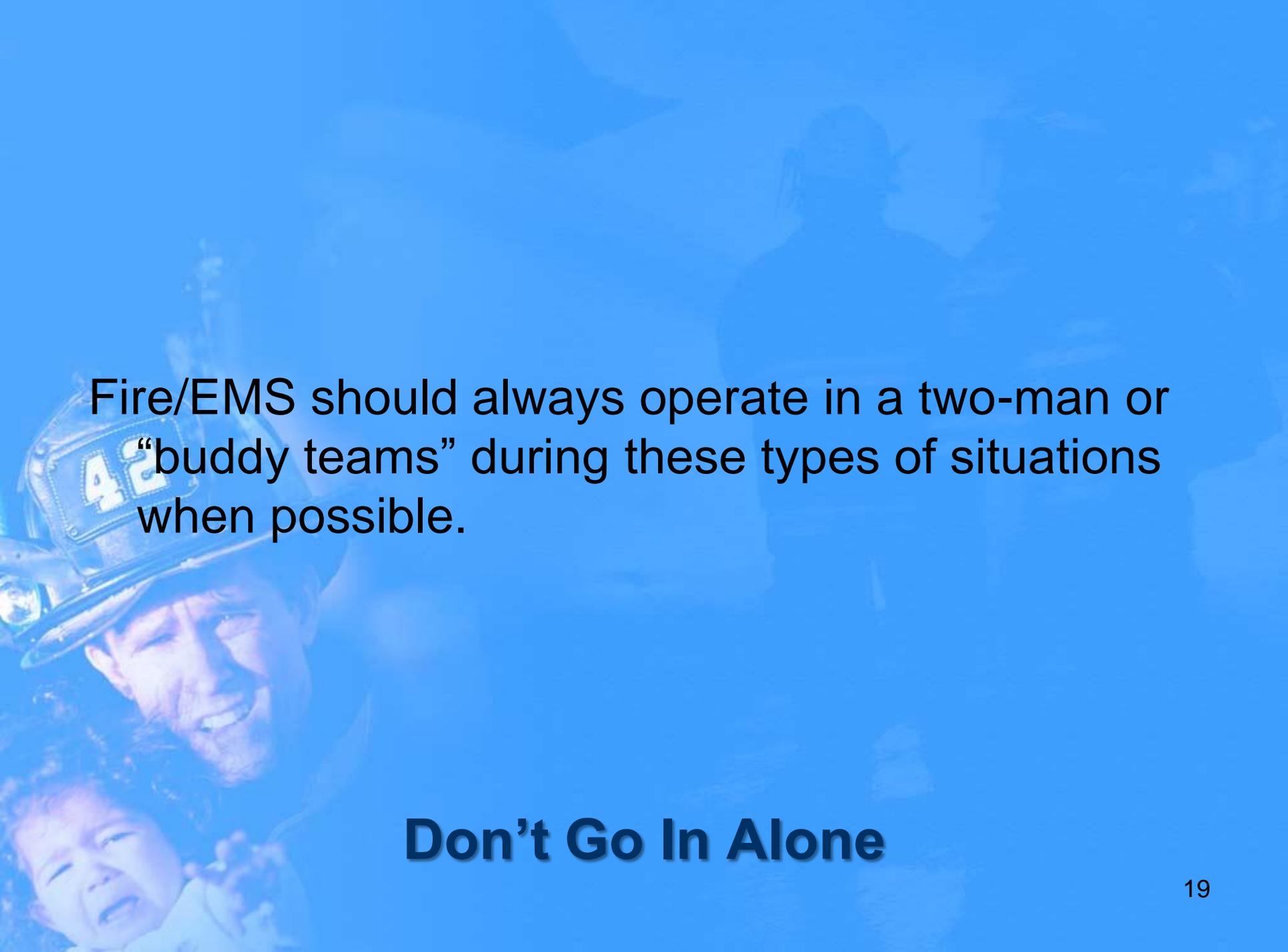
⦿ Shutdown warning lights and siren and do not pass by or park in front of the incident.

⦿ Stop the unit about 50-100 feet from the location and position your unit where it cannot be seen.

## Arrival Options

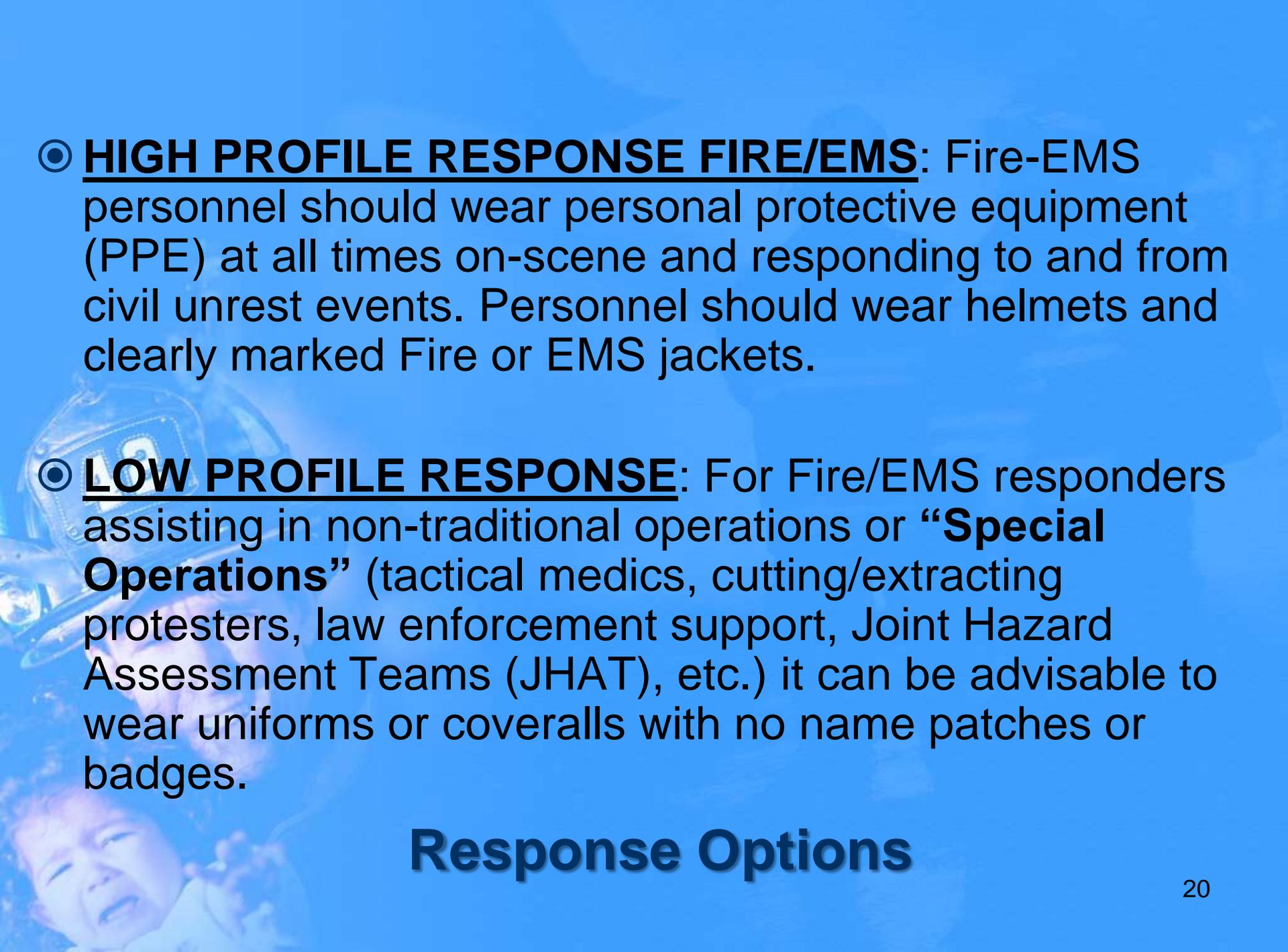
- 
- ⦿ Constantly maintain a sense of caution with dealing with suspicious or hostile crowds.
  - ⦿ Reminder not everyone will greet Fire/EMS responders with “open arms”.
  - ⦿ Maintain a good working relationship with law enforcement and utilize a “Unified Command” approach to these type of incidents when possible.

## **Crowd Strategies**

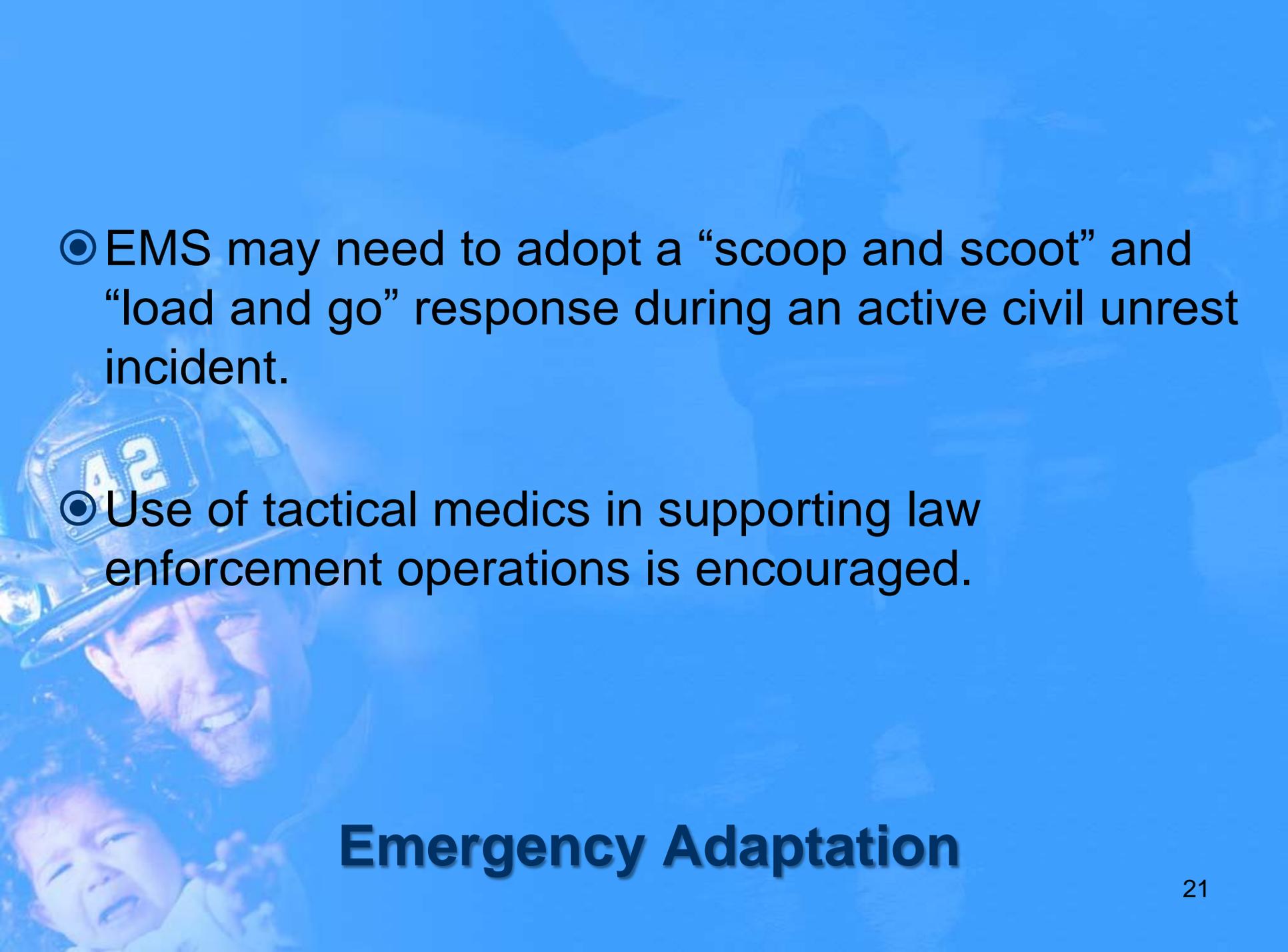


Fire/EMS should always operate in a two-man or “buddy teams” during these types of situations when possible.

**Don't Go In Alone**

- 
- The background of the slide features a blue-tinted image. On the left side, there is a close-up of a firefighter's helmet with a '12' on it. In the bottom left corner, there is a photograph of a young child crying. The rest of the background is a solid blue color.
- ◎ **HIGH PROFILE RESPONSE FIRE/EMS**: Fire-EMS personnel should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times on-scene and responding to and from civil unrest events. Personnel should wear helmets and clearly marked Fire or EMS jackets.
  - ◎ **LOW PROFILE RESPONSE**: For Fire/EMS responders assisting in non-traditional operations or “**Special Operations**” (tactical medics, cutting/extracting protesters, law enforcement support, Joint Hazard Assessment Teams (JHAT), etc.) it can be advisable to wear uniforms or coveralls with no name patches or badges.

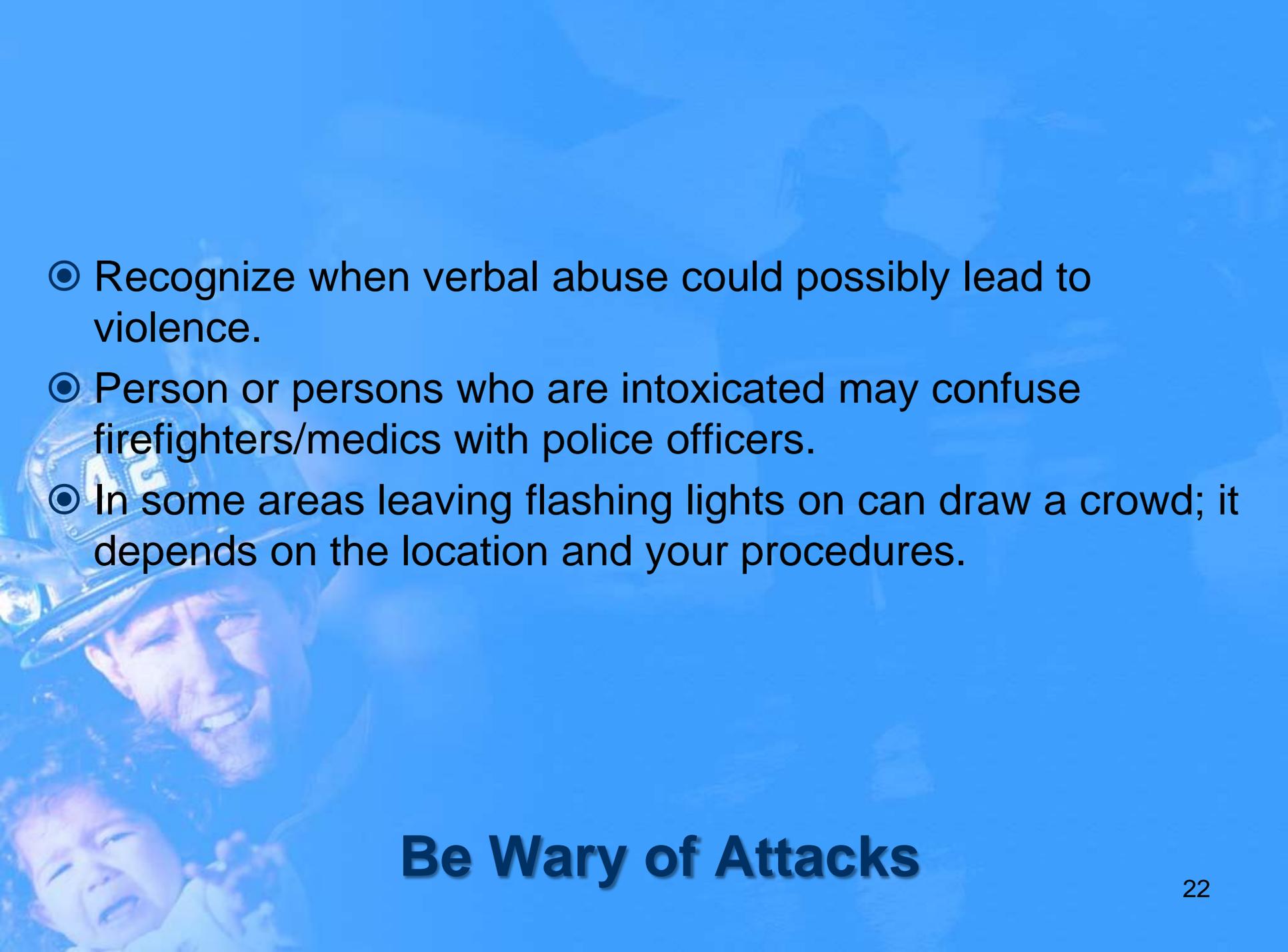
## Response Options



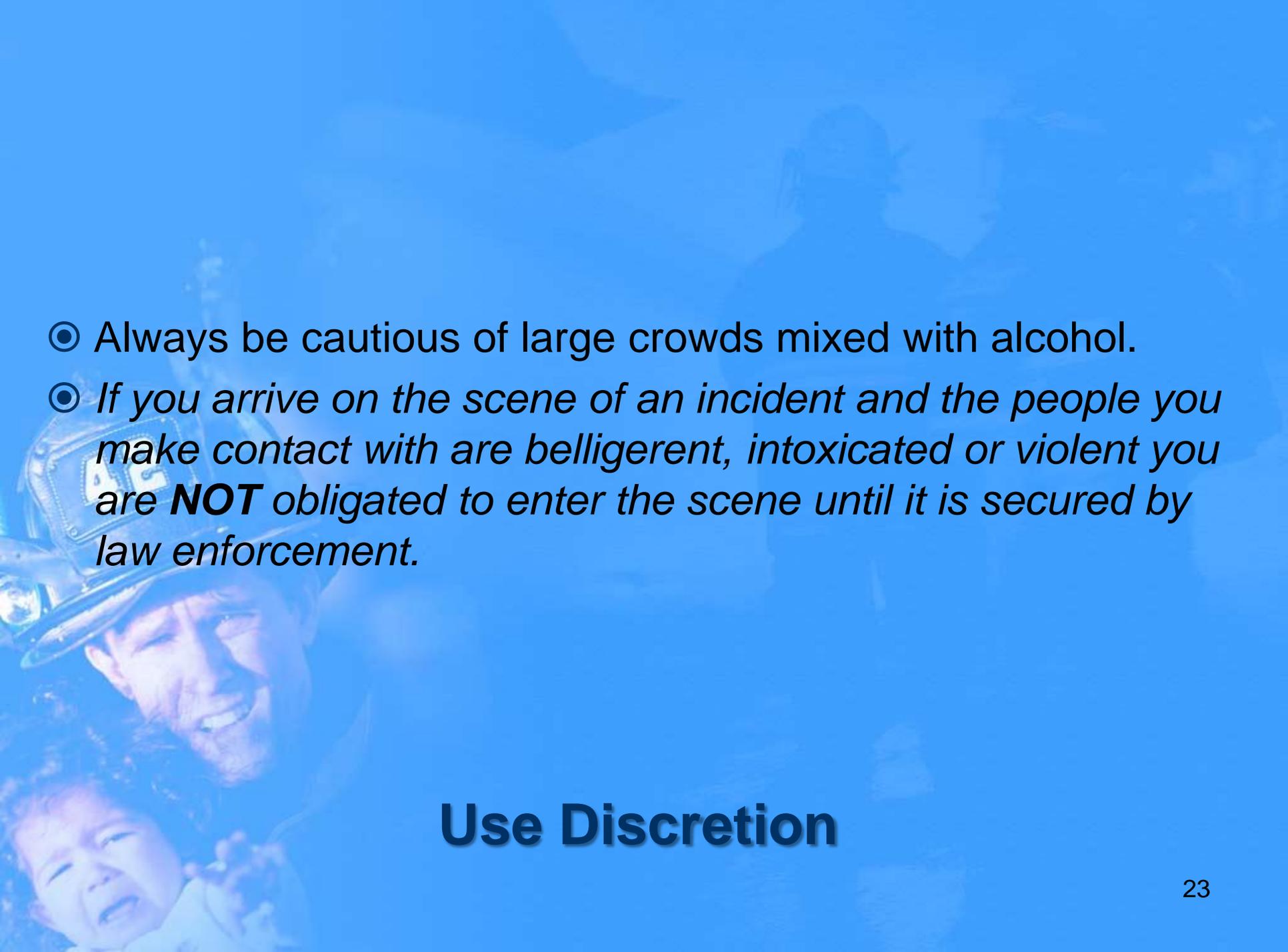
◎ EMS may need to adopt a “scoop and scoot” and “load and go” response during an active civil unrest incident.

◎ Use of tactical medics in supporting law enforcement operations is encouraged.

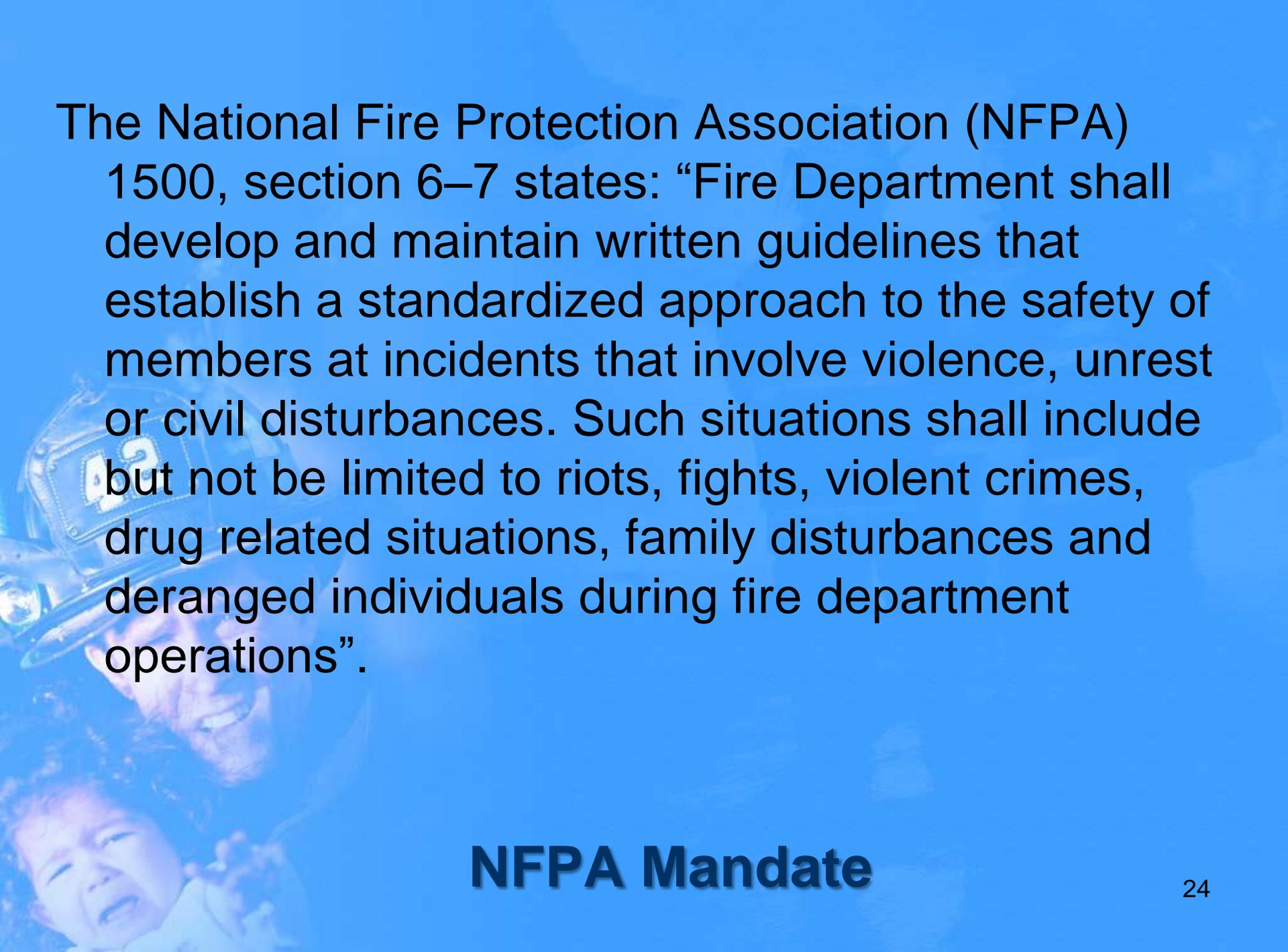
## **Emergency Adaptation**

- 
- ⦿ Recognize when verbal abuse could possibly lead to violence.
  - ⦿ Person or persons who are intoxicated may confuse firefighters/medics with police officers.
  - ⦿ In some areas leaving flashing lights on can draw a crowd; it depends on the location and your procedures.

**Be Wary of Attacks**

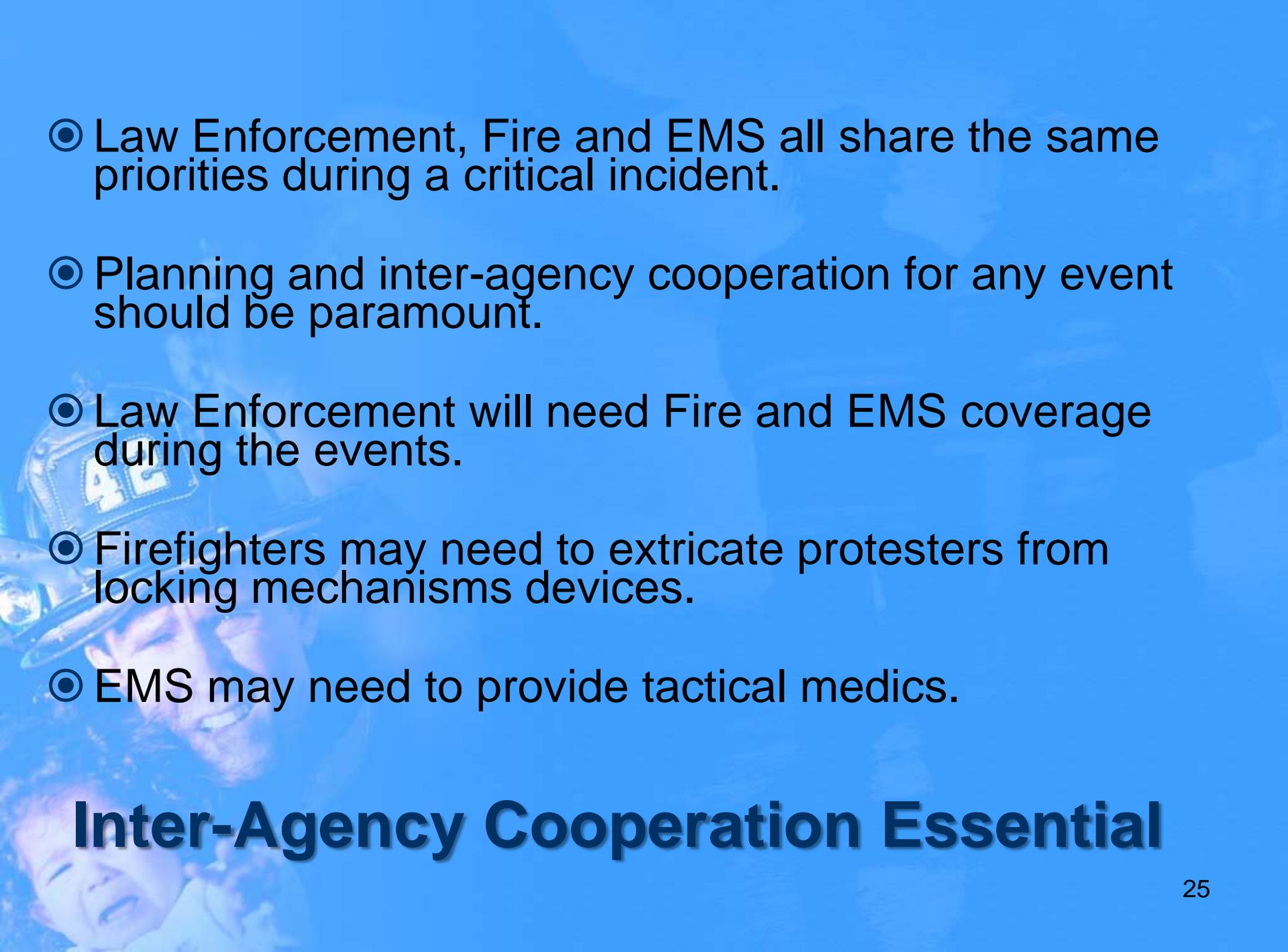
- 
- ◎ Always be cautious of large crowds mixed with alcohol.
  - ◎ *If you arrive on the scene of an incident and the people you make contact with are belligerent, intoxicated or violent you are **NOT** obligated to enter the scene until it is secured by law enforcement.*

**Use Discretion**

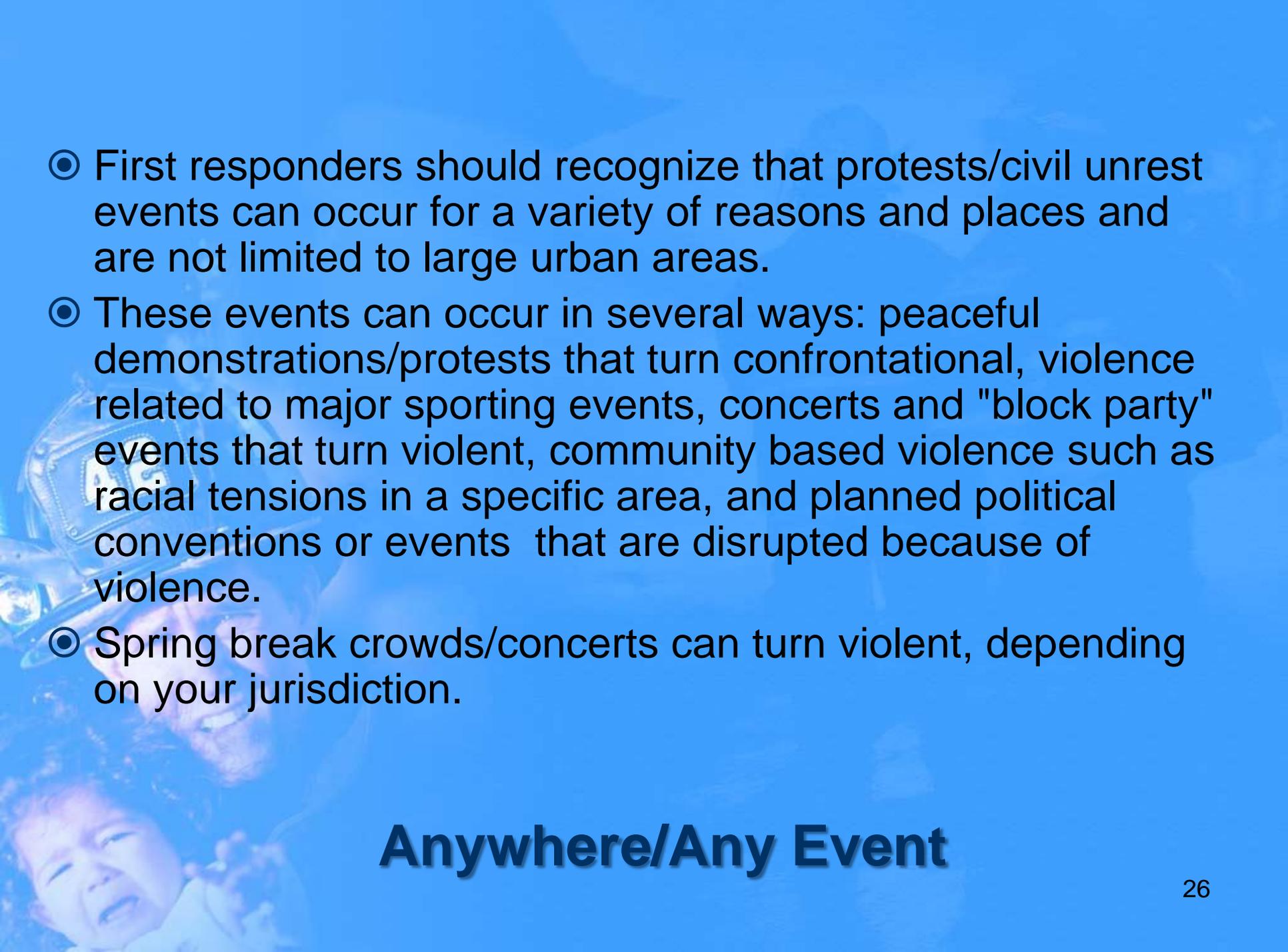


The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1500, section 6–7 states: “Fire Department shall develop and maintain written guidelines that establish a standardized approach to the safety of members at incidents that involve violence, unrest or civil disturbances. Such situations shall include but not be limited to riots, fights, violent crimes, drug related situations, family disturbances and deranged individuals during fire department operations”.

## **NFPA Mandate**

- 
- ◎ Law Enforcement, Fire and EMS all share the same priorities during a critical incident.
  - ◎ Planning and inter-agency cooperation for any event should be paramount.
  - ◎ Law Enforcement will need Fire and EMS coverage during the events.
  - ◎ Firefighters may need to extricate protesters from locking mechanisms devices.
  - ◎ EMS may need to provide tactical medics.

**Inter-Agency Cooperation Essential**

- 
- ◎ First responders should recognize that protests/civil unrest events can occur for a variety of reasons and places and are not limited to large urban areas.
  - ◎ These events can occur in several ways: peaceful demonstrations/protests that turn confrontational, violence related to major sporting events, concerts and "block party" events that turn violent, community based violence such as racial tensions in a specific area, and planned political conventions or events that are disrupted because of violence.
  - ◎ Spring break crowds/concerts can turn violent, depending on your jurisdiction.

**Anywhere/Any Event**

## FBI Intelligence Bulletin #89, 10/15/03

### TACTICS USED DURING PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

The FBI Intelligence Bulletin #89 of 10/15/03 has an informative article on the sophisticated techniques and tactics used during protests and demonstrations by well-organized groups. It discussed the use of safe houses, training camps, improvised weapons, surveillance, communications, vandalism, and so on. You may want to ask your law enforcement counterparts to provide you with a briefing on the highlights of this law enforcement-sensitive document.

## **Well-Planned Violence**

- ⦿ A collection of anarchist or anarchist affinity groups organized for a specific protest.
- ⦿ Held in reserve and placed into locations where law enforcement shows up in strength.
- ⦿ Is a tactic, not an organization.

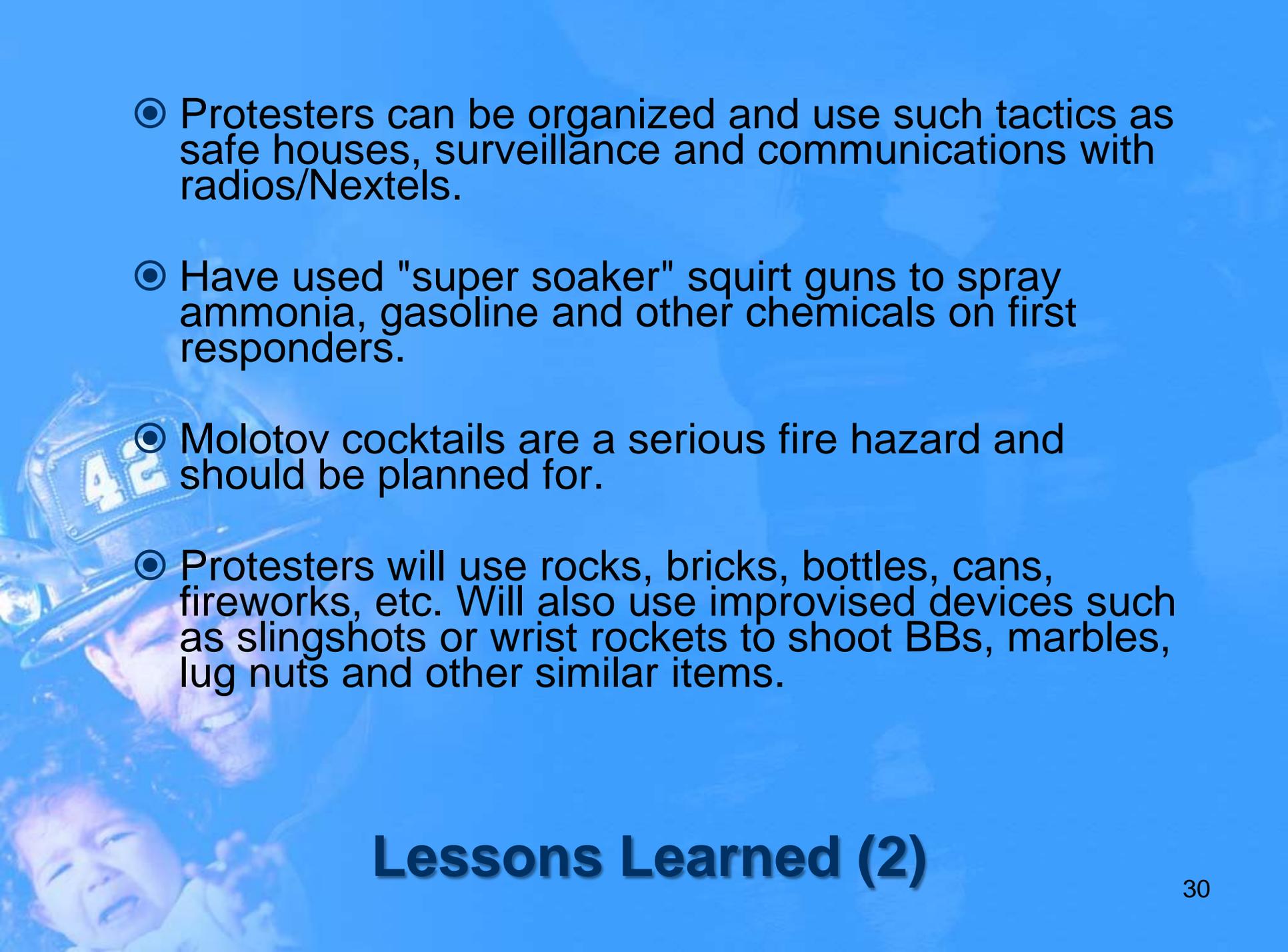


## Black Block

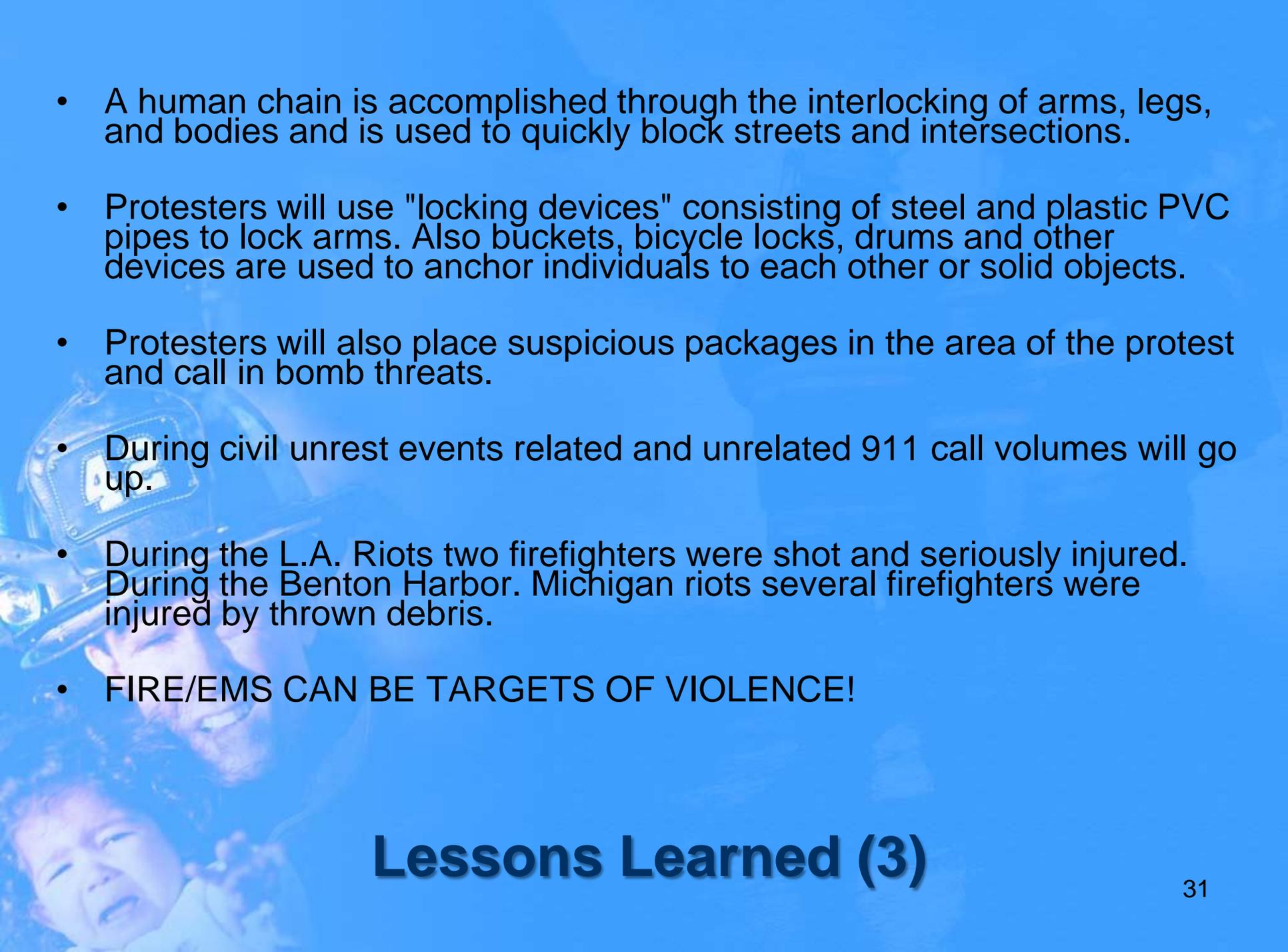
## Experience with past civil unrest events have shown:

- ⦿ Pre-planning is critical if there is going to be a planned event.
- ⦿ Immediate interagency cooperation/Unified Command is essential.
- ⦿ Clear communications are necessary for effective operations.
- ⦿ Access to helicopters for overhead assessments is a plus.
- ⦿ Move or empty trash dumpsters since they are easy targets of nosra.

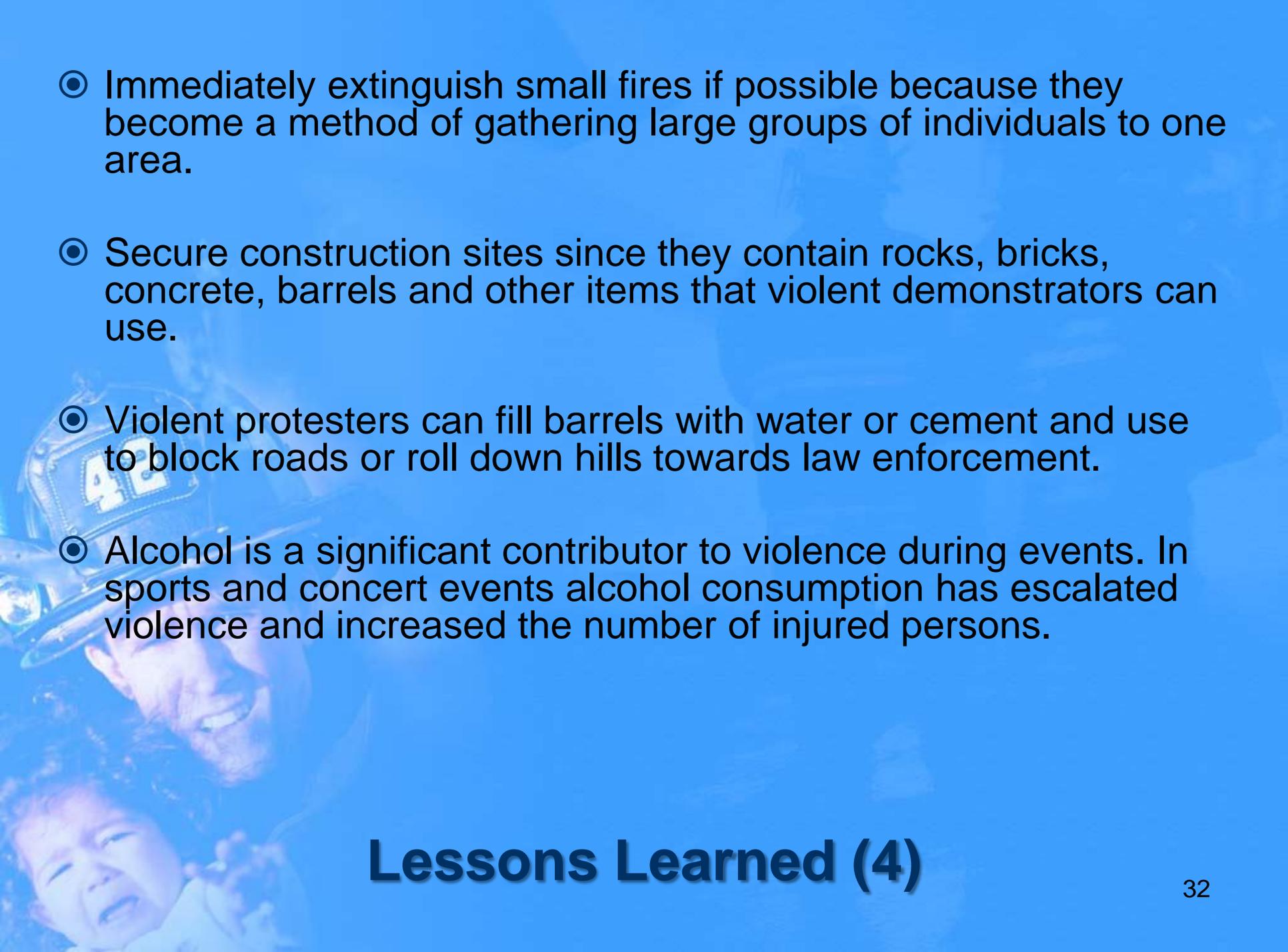
## **Lessons Learned**

- 
- A firefighter wearing a helmet with 'A2' on it is smiling and holding a crying child. The background is a blue-tinted image of a crowd of people.
- ◎ Protesters can be organized and use such tactics as safe houses, surveillance and communications with radios/Nextels.
  - ◎ Have used "super soaker" squirt guns to spray ammonia, gasoline and other chemicals on first responders.
  - ◎ Molotov cocktails are a serious fire hazard and should be planned for.
  - ◎ Protesters will use rocks, bricks, bottles, cans, fireworks, etc. Will also use improvised devices such as slingshots or wrist rockets to shoot BBs, marbles, lug nuts and other similar items.

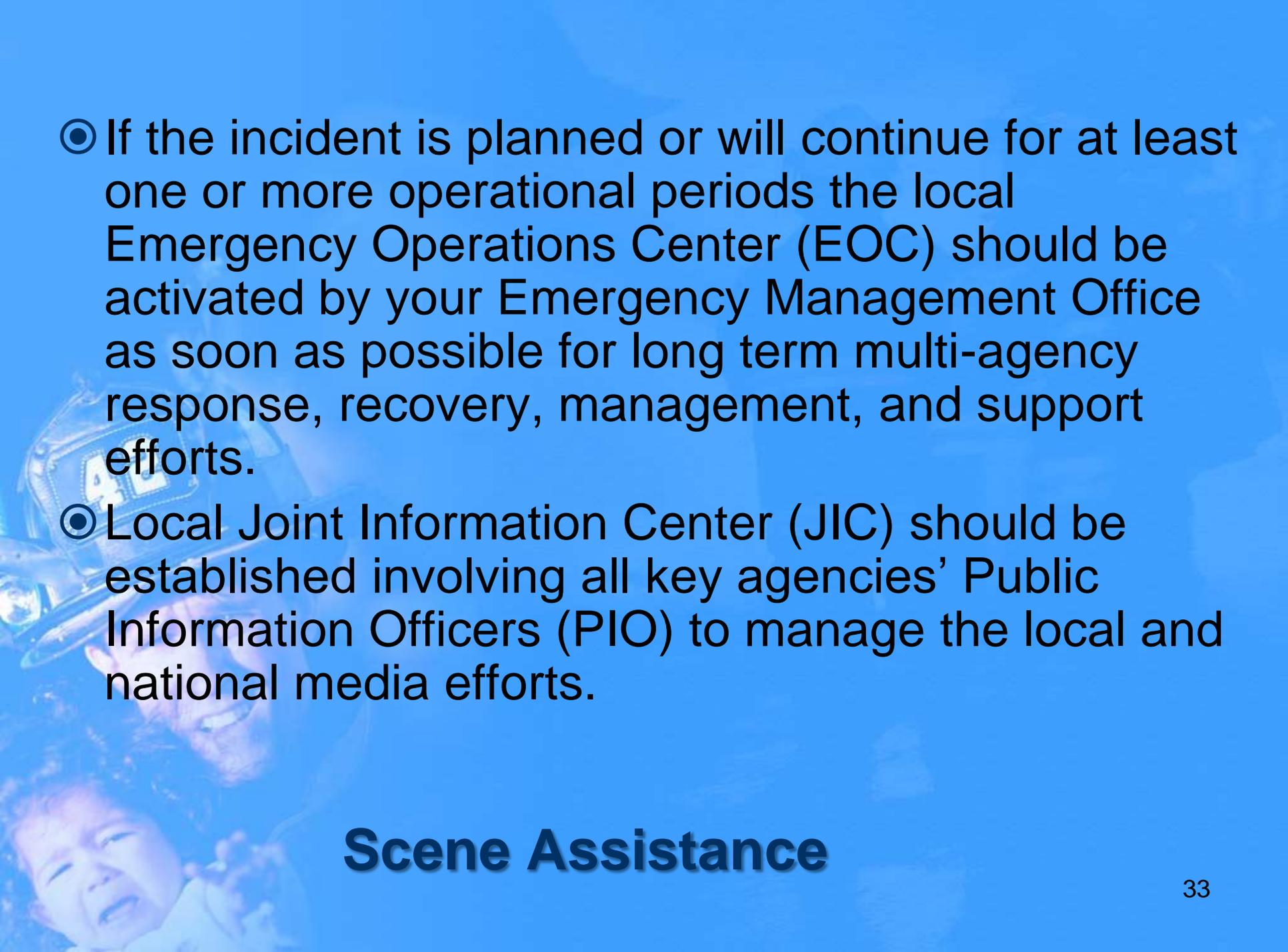
## **Lessons Learned (2)**

- 
- A human chain is accomplished through the interlocking of arms, legs, and bodies and is used to quickly block streets and intersections.
  - Protesters will use "locking devices" consisting of steel and plastic PVC pipes to lock arms. Also buckets, bicycle locks, drums and other devices are used to anchor individuals to each other or solid objects.
  - Protesters will also place suspicious packages in the area of the protest and call in bomb threats.
  - During civil unrest events related and unrelated 911 call volumes will go up.
  - During the L.A. Riots two firefighters were shot and seriously injured. During the Benton Harbor, Michigan riots several firefighters were injured by thrown debris.
  - FIRE/EMS CAN BE TARGETS OF VIOLENCE!

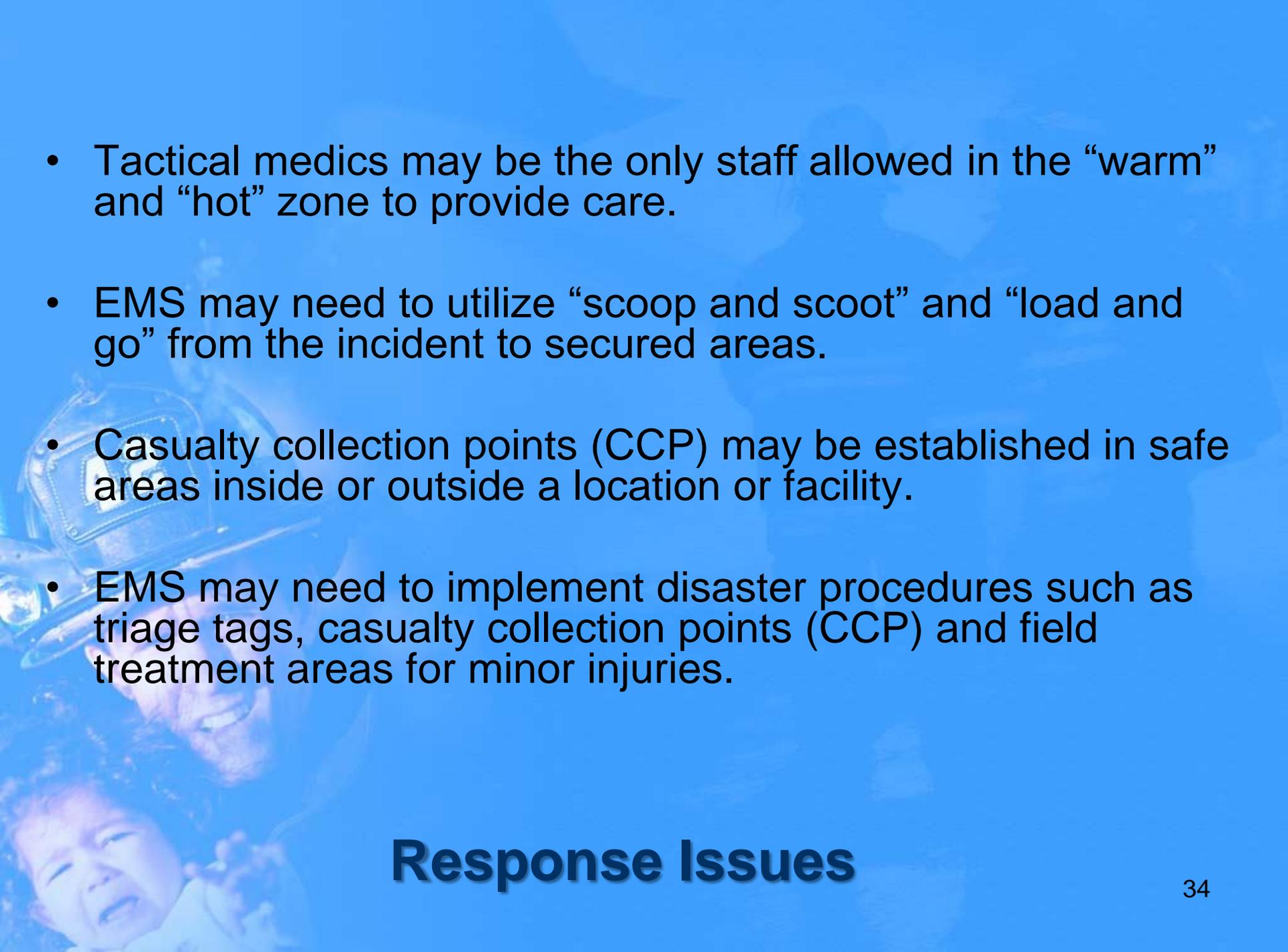
## **Lessons Learned (3)**

- 
- Immediately extinguish small fires if possible because they become a method of gathering large groups of individuals to one area.
  - Secure construction sites since they contain rocks, bricks, concrete, barrels and other items that violent demonstrators can use.
  - Violent protesters can fill barrels with water or cement and use to block roads or roll down hills towards law enforcement.
  - Alcohol is a significant contributor to violence during events. In sports and concert events alcohol consumption has escalated violence and increased the number of injured persons.

## **Lessons Learned (4)**

- 
- If the incident is planned or will continue for at least one or more operational periods the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC) should be activated by your Emergency Management Office as soon as possible for long term multi-agency response, recovery, management, and support efforts.
  - Local Joint Information Center (JIC) should be established involving all key agencies' Public Information Officers (PIO) to manage the local and national media efforts.

## **Scene Assistance**

- 
- Tactical medics may be the only staff allowed in the “warm” and “hot” zone to provide care.
  - EMS may need to utilize “scoop and scoot” and “load and go” from the incident to secured areas.
  - Casualty collection points (CCP) may be established in safe areas inside or outside a location or facility.
  - EMS may need to implement disaster procedures such as triage tags, casualty collection points (CCP) and field treatment areas for minor injuries.

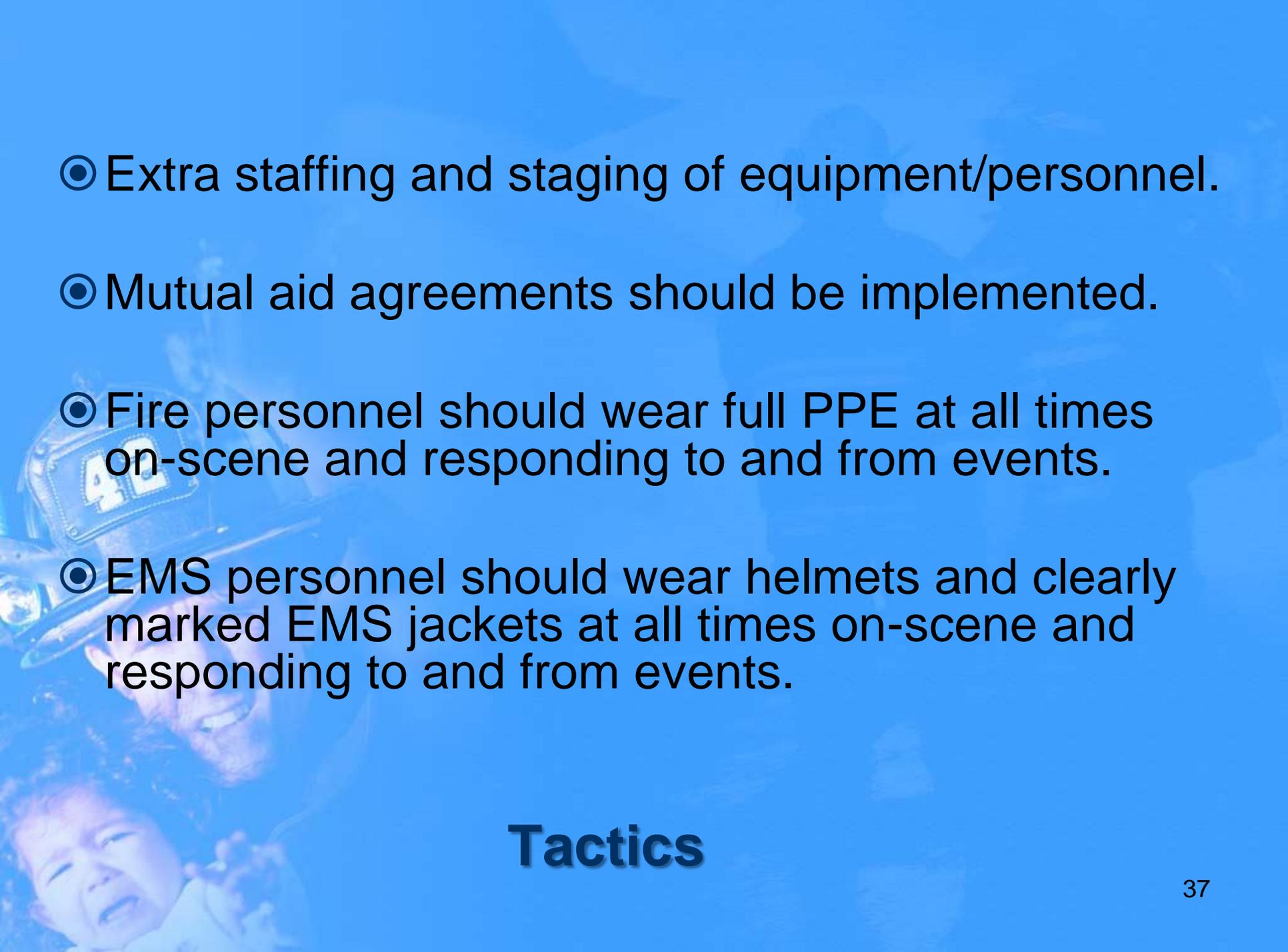
## Response Issues

- 
- Trained and equipped tactical medics from law enforcement agencies, fire service, and emergency medical services are an excellent resource to use during these types of events.
  - Tactical medics are specially trained and equipped firefighters/medics who to provide specialized casualty medical planning, care and support to law enforcement tactical and mobile field force (MFF) operations.

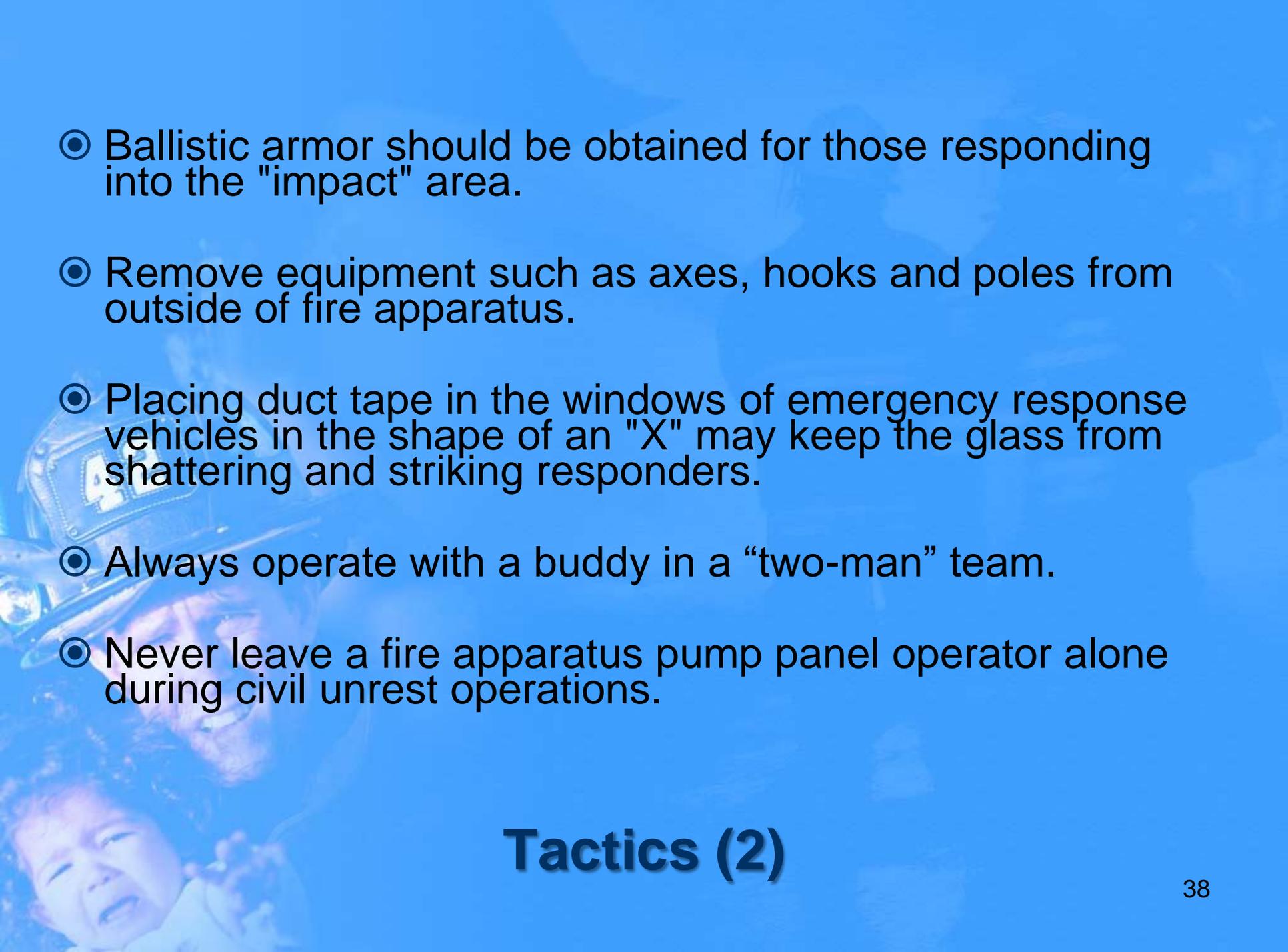
## **Tactical Medics**

- 
- ◎ Look for places to take concealment and cover if needed.
  - ◎ **Cover** may protect you from thrown rocks and bottles
  - ◎ **Concealment** hides you without offering any real protection.

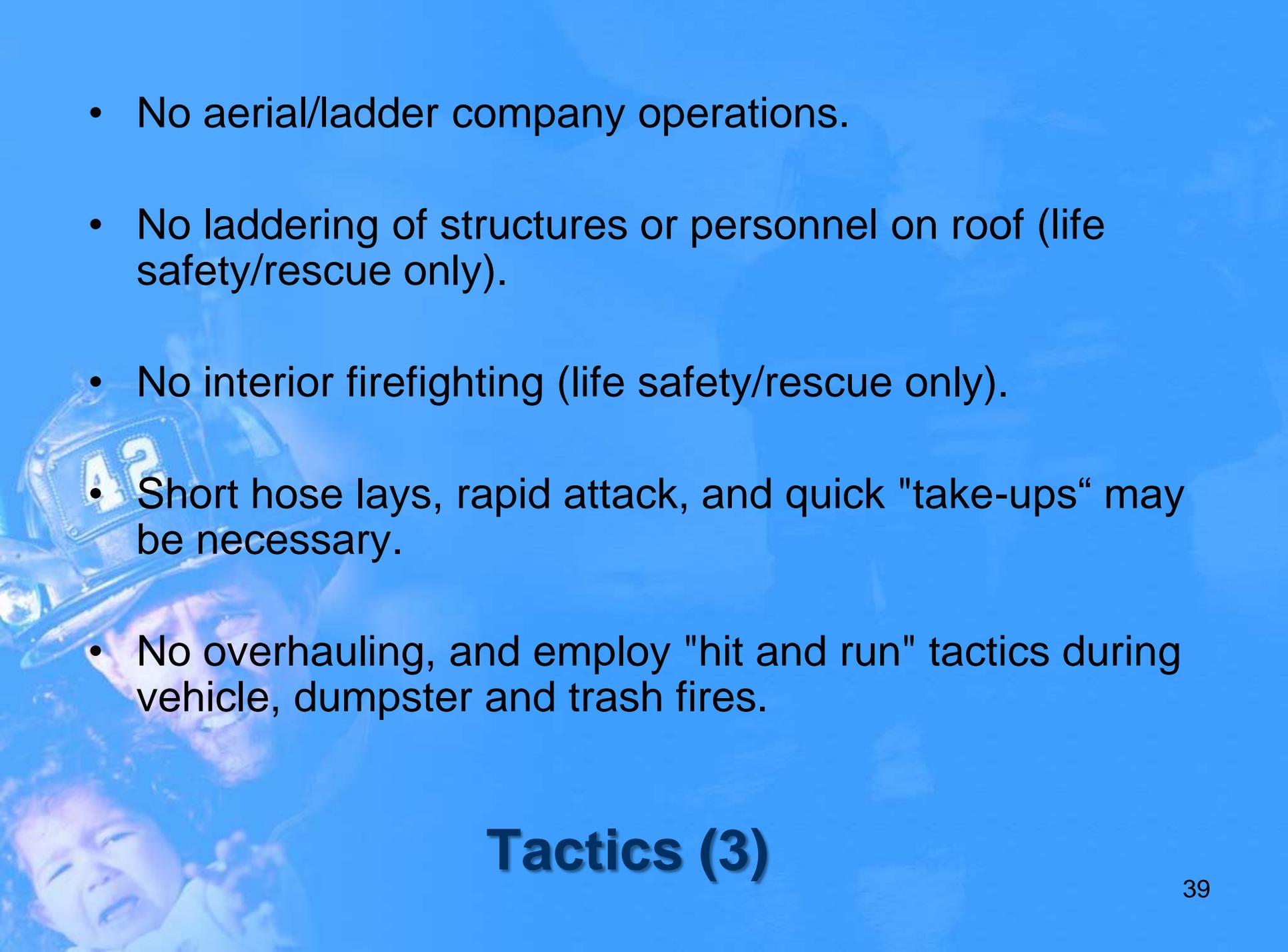
## Cover vs. Concealment

- 
- ◎ Extra staffing and staging of equipment/personnel.
  - ◎ Mutual aid agreements should be implemented.
  - ◎ Fire personnel should wear full PPE at all times on-scene and responding to and from events.
  - ◎ EMS personnel should wear helmets and clearly marked EMS jackets at all times on-scene and responding to and from events.

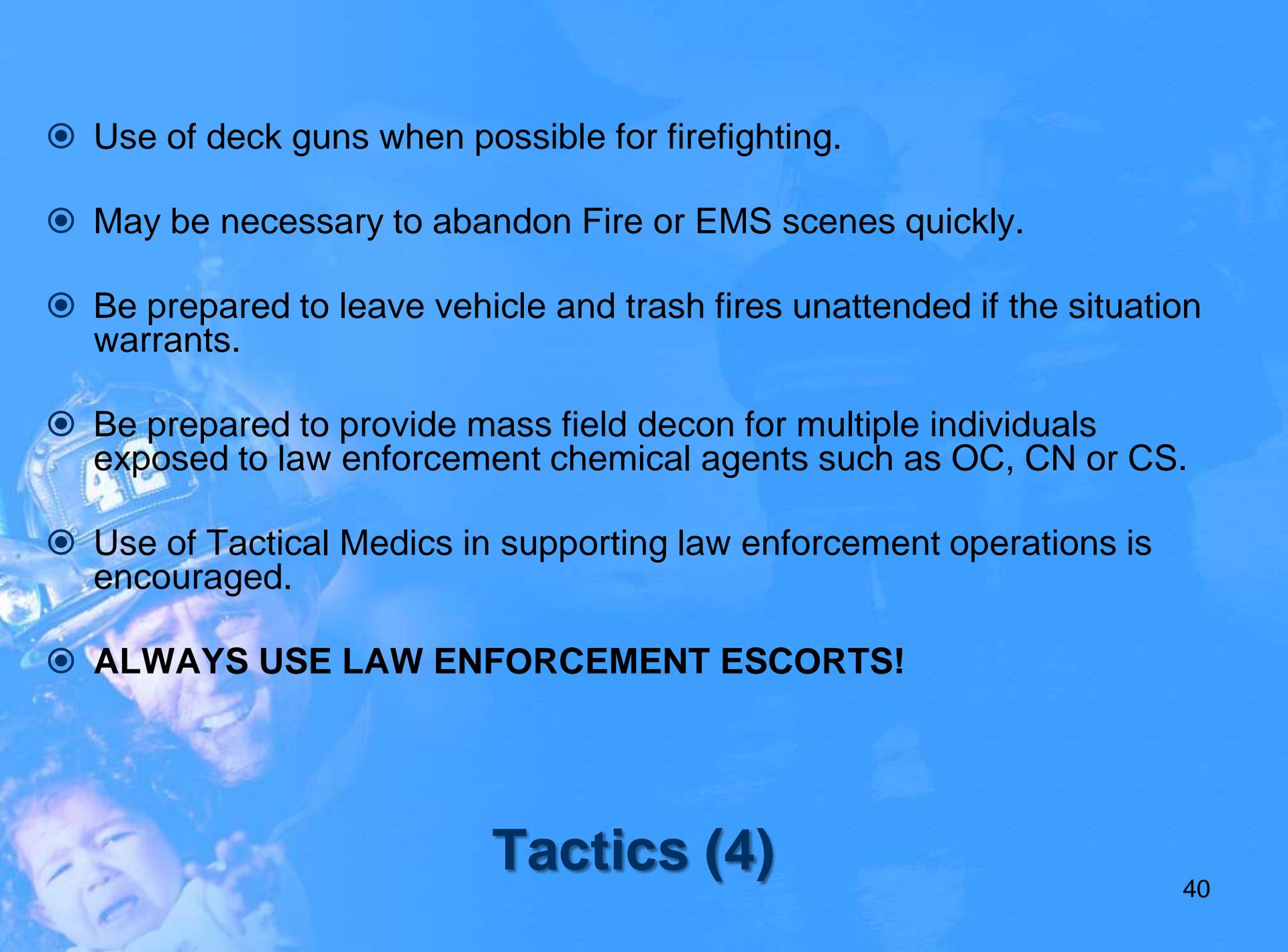
## Tactics

- 
- ◎ Ballistic armor should be obtained for those responding into the "impact" area.
  - ◎ Remove equipment such as axes, hooks and poles from outside of fire apparatus.
  - ◎ Placing duct tape in the windows of emergency response vehicles in the shape of an "X" may keep the glass from shattering and striking responders.
  - ◎ Always operate with a buddy in a "two-man" team.
  - ◎ Never leave a fire apparatus pump panel operator alone during civil unrest operations.

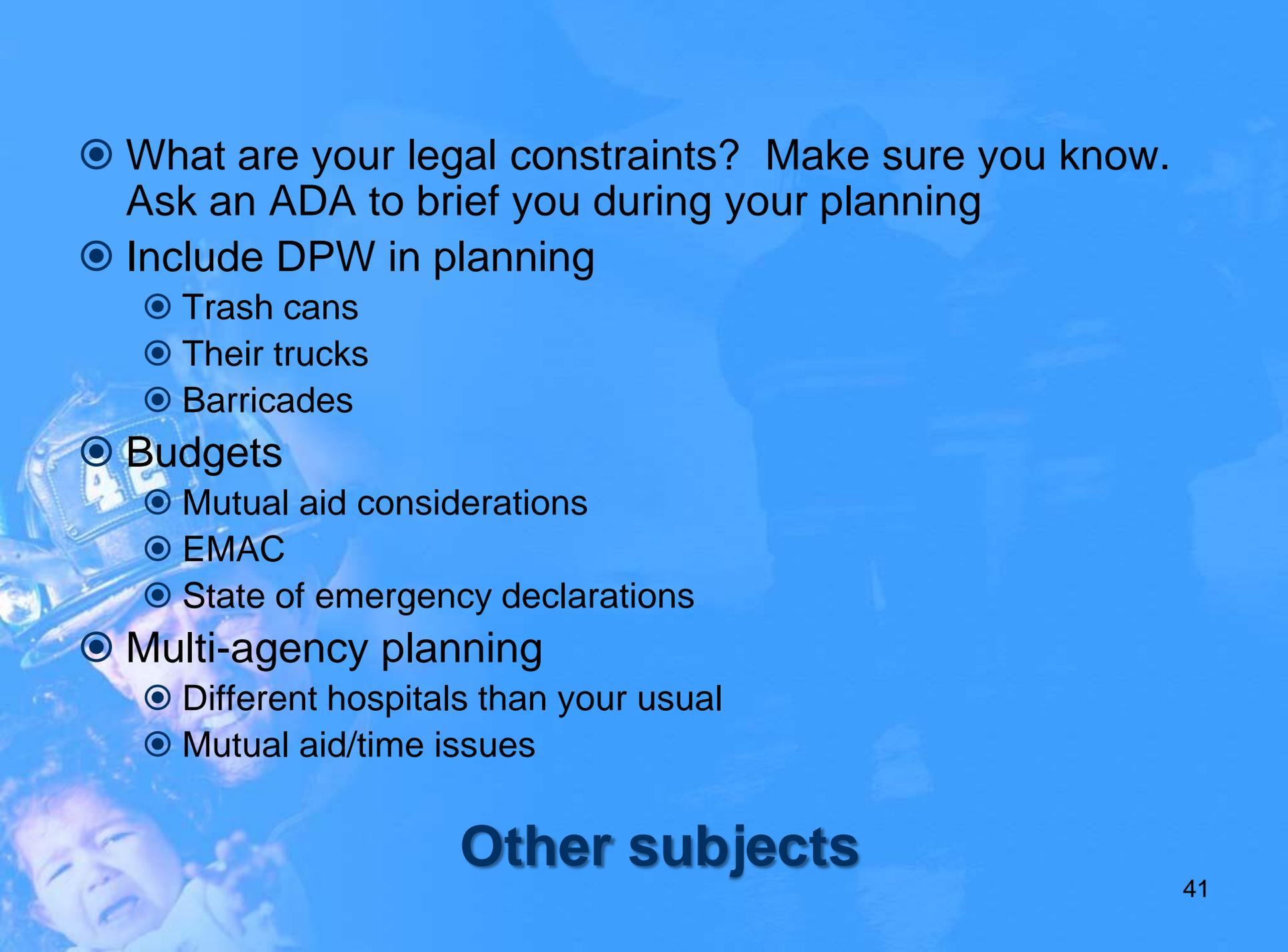
## Tactics (2)

- 
- No aerial/ladder company operations.
  - No laddering of structures or personnel on roof (life safety/rescue only).
  - No interior firefighting (life safety/rescue only).
  - Short hose lays, rapid attack, and quick "take-ups" may be necessary.
  - No overhauling, and employ "hit and run" tactics during vehicle, dumpster and trash fires.

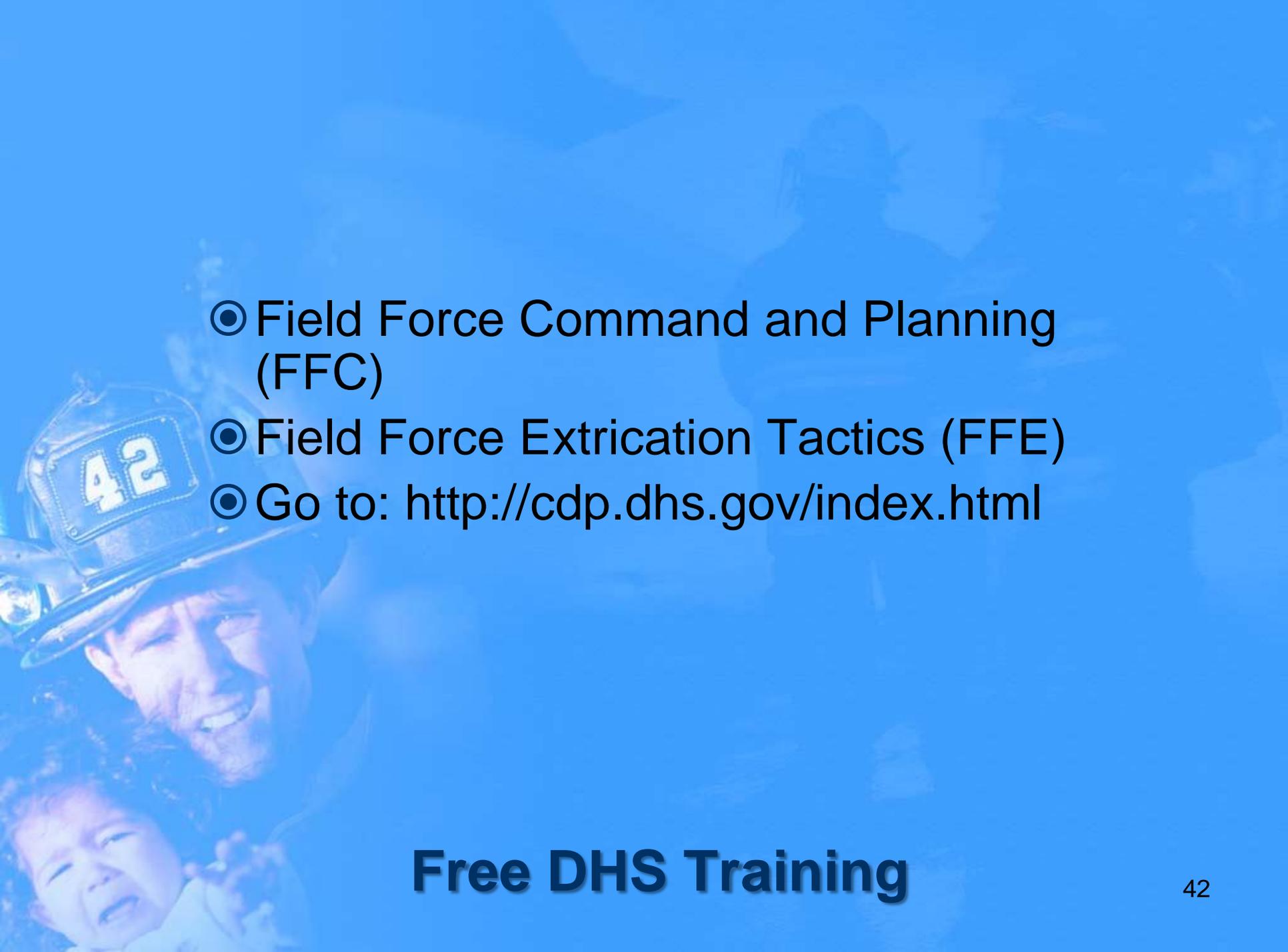
## **Tactics (3)**

- 
- Use of deck guns when possible for firefighting.
  - May be necessary to abandon Fire or EMS scenes quickly.
  - Be prepared to leave vehicle and trash fires unattended if the situation warrants.
  - Be prepared to provide mass field decon for multiple individuals exposed to law enforcement chemical agents such as OC, CN or CS.
  - Use of Tactical Medics in supporting law enforcement operations is encouraged.
  - **ALWAYS USE LAW ENFORCEMENT ESCORTS!**

## Tactics (4)

- 
- ◎ What are your legal constraints? Make sure you know. Ask an ADA to brief you during your planning
  - ◎ Include DPW in planning
    - ◎ Trash cans
    - ◎ Their trucks
    - ◎ Barricades
  - ◎ Budgets
    - ◎ Mutual aid considerations
    - ◎ EMAC
    - ◎ State of emergency declarations
  - ◎ Multi-agency planning
    - ◎ Different hospitals than your usual
    - ◎ Mutual aid/time issues

**Other subjects**

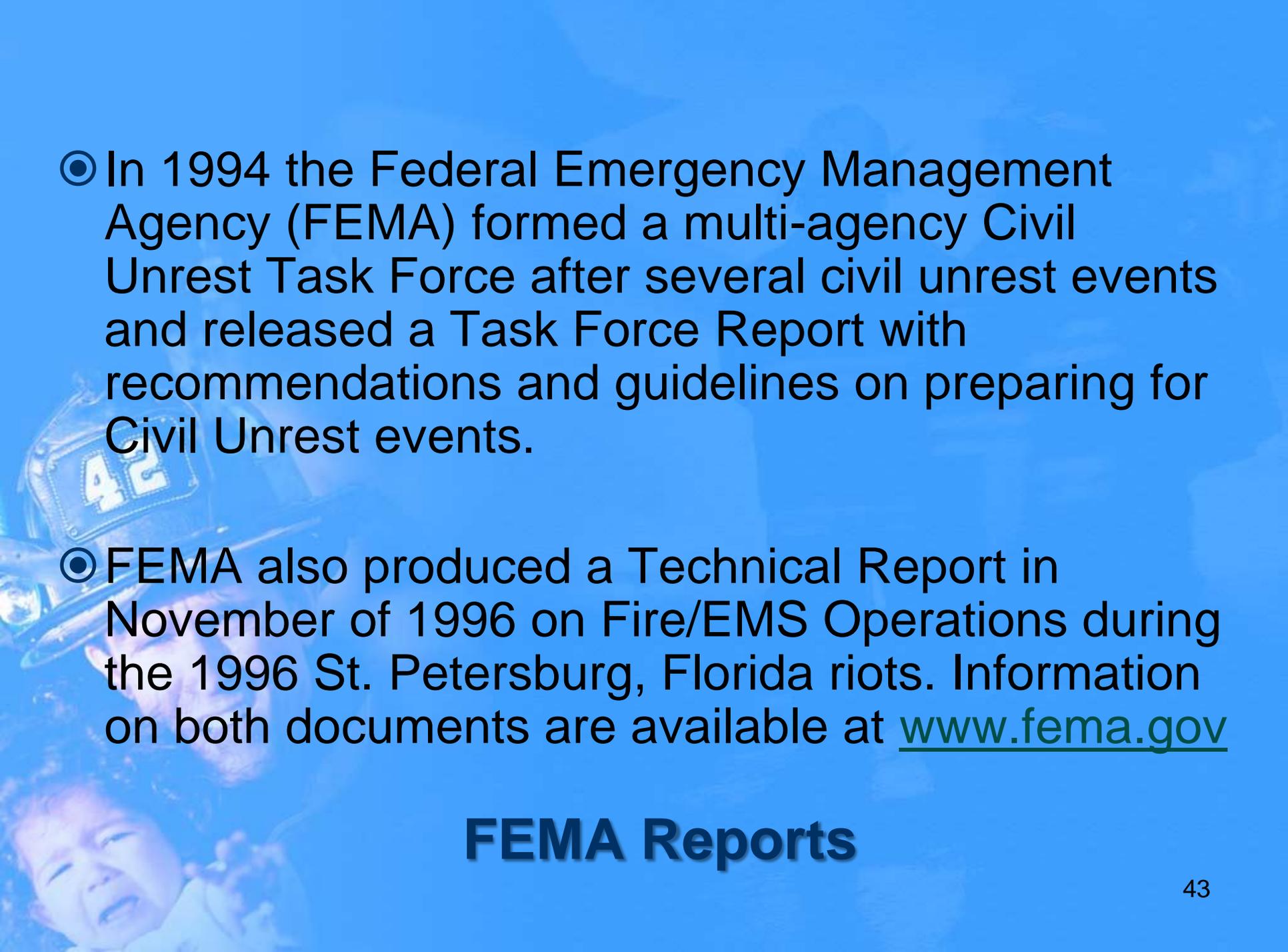
A firefighter wearing a helmet with the number 42 is holding a crying child. The background is a blue-tinted image of a fire scene with firefighters in full gear.

© Field Force Command and Planning (FFC)

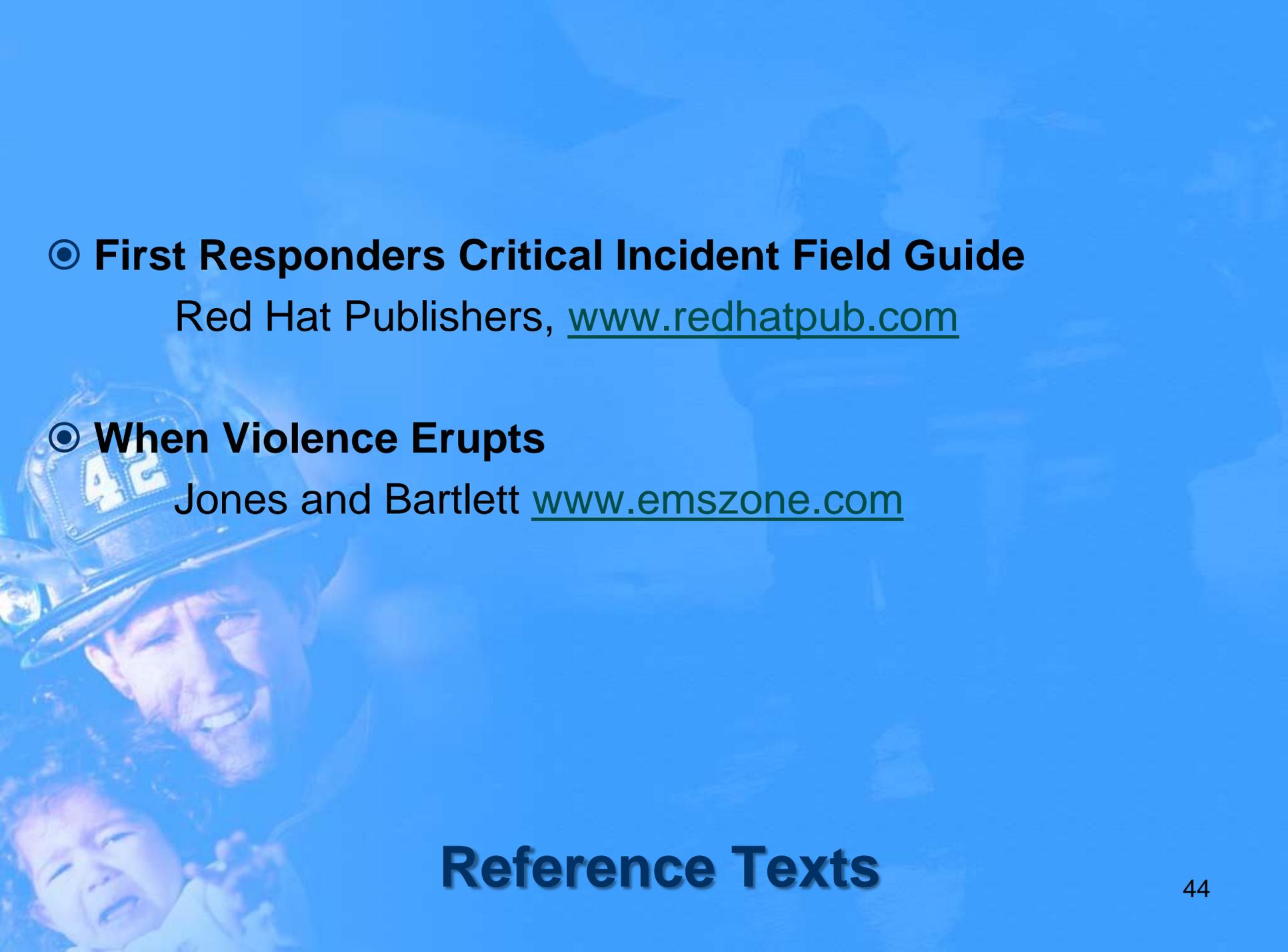
© Field Force Extrication Tactics (FFE)

© Go to: <http://cdp.dhs.gov/index.html>

**Free DHS Training**

- 
- ◎ In 1994 the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) formed a multi-agency Civil Unrest Task Force after several civil unrest events and released a Task Force Report with recommendations and guidelines on preparing for Civil Unrest events.
  - ◎ FEMA also produced a Technical Report in November of 1996 on Fire/EMS Operations during the 1996 St. Petersburg, Florida riots. Information on both documents are available at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

## FEMA Reports



© **First Responders Critical Incident Field Guide**

Red Hat Publishers, [www.redhatpub.com](http://www.redhatpub.com)

© **When Violence Erupts**

Jones and Bartlett [www.emszone.com](http://www.emszone.com)

**Reference Texts**

***Thank you & be safe!***



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