



IACP LAW ENFORCEMENT POLICY CENTER

Need to Know.....

Excited Delirium

Law enforcement officers should be familiar with the characteristic signs and symptoms of excited delirium (ExDS) and approach situations involving individuals displaying these signs as medical emergencies that could result in sudden death.

- Excited delirium (ExDS) is a **medical disorder** that is not fully understood—there is no definitive evidence on what causes it or why some individuals who present with symptoms die.
- Individuals experiencing ExDS often **exhibit** constant physical activity, extreme agitation, elevated body temperature often resulting in nudity, screaming or making unintelligible noises, and excessive strength.
- In cases where death occurs, the following **series of events** almost always occurs:
 - The individual shows signs of ExDS and is under the influence of drugs or has a history of mental illness.
 - There is a struggle with law enforcement.
 - Some sort of force is used (physical, chemical, or electronic).
 - The individual is restrained.
 - The individual stops struggling, his or her breathing becomes shallow, and within minutes he or she is dead.
- Assuming the individual is not a danger to officers or others, the primary objective of law enforcement officers in these situations should be to **rapidly control** the individual and transfer him or her to the care of emergency medical providers.
- **Emergency medical services (EMS)** personnel should be requested as soon as possible if ExDS is suspected.
- Due to the potential of rapid death in these instances, law enforcement personnel must act quickly to **minimize the duration of resistance** and struggle with the individual, which is thought to contribute to death. Since individuals with ExDS often do not feel pain, physical takedown using a swarming technique might be preferred when an adequate number of officers are present.
- Only those **restraints** necessary to control the situation should be used, and the subject should be positioned in way that assists breathing, such as on his or her side.
- As soon as the subject is controlled, EMS personnel should examine the subject and provide medical aid as necessary, to include **sedation and cooling**.

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