

Appendix 2H

Training Memo—Recognizing Signs of Strangulation

Why is it important for call takers to recognize signs of strangulation?

- Contribute to a safety-oriented response.
- Avoid incorrect assumptions and accurately recognize why it may be difficult for the caller to understand questions and communicate clearly.
- Help determine the nature of the emergency and the response priority.
- Provide accurate information to responding officer about events at the scene.
- Understand caller’s need for reassurance.
- Link victim of strangulation with prompt medical attention.

What is involved?

- Be attentive to signs of strangulation in how the caller sounds and communicates:
 - Difficulty speaking
 - Raspy voice
 - Literally “out of breath”
 - Painful to breathe or swallow
 - Coughing
 - Frightened or panicky
- When there are signs of strangulation in how the caller sounds and communicates, if circumstances permit ask the caller:
 - Have you been hurt? How?
 - Has someone “choked” you? (A more familiar term to most people than “strangled.”)
 - Who did this? Is that person there with you?
- Understand the possible injuries resulting from strangulation:
 - Unconsciousness
 - Swelling of neck and narrowing of airway
 - Ruptured or damaged tissue
 - Internal bleeding
 - Oxygen deprivation
- Communicate all signs of and information related to strangulation to responding officers.
- Recognize that strangulation is associated with increased risk of lethality. See *Appendix 1A: Practitioners’ Guide to Risk and Danger in Domestic Violence Cases*.