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A Passenger Train Collided with a Bus in Prague. There Were Dozens of Rescuers.

On Tuesday, April 18, 2017, Integrated Rescue System units trained a coordination of individual activities in an event of an accident with mass injuries. The theme of the event, prepared for approximately 150 rescuers, corresponds to the current phenomenon of recent months, namely disregarding the alert signalling at railway crossings. Almost every day, we can repeatedly see how current the topic is.

Even numbers from rail and police statistics speak clearly. Only in 2016 there were 175 crash casualties that claimed 45 deaths and seven dozen injuries. More and more frequent accidents are caused by a group of drivers that no one would expect. These are professional drivers. It is precisely a crash of a train with trucks or even buses which belongs to the most tragic ones.

Based on the cases recorded by cameras placed at crossings, it is clearly evident that even the most sophisticated crossing safety device will not be effective if it is not respected by the drivers themselves.

“99 percent of all accidents at railway crossings are caused by drivers. They do not even respect the crossings with the barriers lately. They either bypass or lift them, or even going into the crossing when the red light is still on. Moreover, a whole trio of traffic signs warns before each crossing in the range of 240, 160 and 80 metres before the crossing. Nor the argument that they did not know about the crossing or did not have time to manage to bring a car to a halt will stand here”, states Mr. Pavel Surý, Director General of SŽDC, s.o.

The simulated train crash with the bus, which took place in the premises of the Prague Fire Department of SŽDC, had a similar course. Although the driver responded quickly and used the quick-acting brake, there was a crash, deformation, and subsequent overturning of the bus onto the side. This is exactly how the situation looks like when the first EMS units arrive.

There were six dozen students in the role of figurants with varying range of injuries waiting for the rescuers. The performed injuries were from the least serious to the most tragic ones. And precisely quick help, sorting of the injured people and their evacuation from the crashed vehicles was the main point of the exercise for more than 150 rescuers.

“The goal of the tactical training “The Train 2017” was to practice the deployment and interoperability of the IRS units and other entities involved in the execution of rescue and disposal works immediately after reporting an emergency train accident,” described the purpose of the joint action Col. Oldřich Klégr from the Fire Rescue Service of the City of Prague.

“It is not a question of whether a similar scenario will ever occur, but only when that happens. Similar exercises are extremely important. When the moment comes, when an accident becomes a reality, we will already have each activity clearly tested and trained. The chances of the injured people to survive are somewhat higher”, added the action’s commander Lt. Cdr. Miloš Němec afterwards.

“The main focus was on rescuing people, their clear and precise sorting according to the type and level of injury and preparation for their subsequent transport to hospital facilities. We also had placed special technology used in similar mass disasters. Perfect collaboration with other units is crucial for us in case of possible misfortune. If it works as it should and everyone knows their role, then we can be focused on the health of patients at maximum”, said Mr. Petr Kolouch, MBA, Director of EMS of the City of Prague.

During the exercise, notifying the IRS units of occurred emergencies and an activation of the crisis management authorities were checked. The emphasis was on the cooperation of units of the IRS and other entities, coordination of a joint action after a large-scale traffic accident by units of Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic, Fire Rescue Service of SŽDC, Fire Rescue Service of Prague Public Transit Company, Emergency Medical Service of the City of Prague and the Police of the Czech Republic.

The units have practiced procedures the commander's staff headquarters, communication between acting forces, performing rescue and liquidation work, sorting out the injured people, and providing pre-hospital emergency care under harsh conditions.

In addition, synergy between the operating centres of units and the Operations Centre of the Crisis Management of the City of Prague has been checked as well as synergy in identifying victims. Information flows were activated between the crisis management bodies and the staff of Fire Rescue Service of the City of Prague, Crisis Management of the City of Prague and Crisis Management of Regional Police Headquarters of the City of Prague.

There were seven units of Fire Rescue Service of the City of Prague, two units of Fire Rescue Service of SŽDC and one unit of Fire Rescue Service of Prague Public Transit Company. The action was carried out in the coordination and cooperation of Emergency Medical Service of the City of Prague, the Police of the Czech Republic and the Municipal Police.

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