



## METTAG: Tomorrow's Miracle ?

by Kevin Kilpatrick

A disaster landscape is a scene of chaos. Initially there is disbelief, then the intrusion of suffering — of cold, heat, rain, thirst, pain, blood, fright, death. A reaching for help.

Chaos reigns until that help arrives. And when it does chaos gradually gives way to an organization of effort that becomes less ragged. It may take minutes. It may take hours. Or it may take days. It depends on many factors.

If help is *knowledgeable* help this means a lot. And if knowledgeable help is also *trained* help this means much more. And if knowledgeable, trained help has the equipment, supplies and support that will allow it to bring organization and order into play then the kind of rescue operation that disaster specialists strive for comes within reach.

This is the type of operation that METTAG was conceived to support. It is important to realize that METTAG was born and developed in the *field* — "where the action is." It was undertaken because *field* disaster conditions dictate certain specific needs and impose certain specific limitations that have to be respected. METTAG's design was thoroughly tested, and the advice of doctors, nurses, firemen, rescue professionals, industrial safety experts, airport safety directors, police and civil defense specialists was sought out, studied, analyzed and implemented. METTAG began as a team effort, and with the objective of saving lives constantly in focus it has remained a team

effort. It must contribute in the most flexible and realistic way possible to the goal of controlling the disaster scene and promoting quick, orderly and documented delivery of casualties to medical care.

"From the strong response reported so far," says local civil defense director Bob Blodgett, responsible for conceiving and developing the METTAG idea, "it looks as though we were right on target. METTAG accounts have now spread into 48 states and several foreign countries. The idea of a *standard* tag is catching on because this means much more effective casualty processing, and that means a big break for the patient and everyone who handles him. Sure, we and the *Journal of Civil Defense* have people who would like to change the METTAG design. We all expected that. We, who made the original decisions in arriving at the present design solution, had a lot of different ideas. But we thrashed these out, and we asked for widespread professional counsel, and we got it. And some of it was contradictory. So the design we originally wound up with had to be the very best workable and tested compromise we could make from the ideas we sifted through. A lot of good ideas were simply not used. It would be impossible. And we all still get suggestions because we ask for them, and we still study each one and analyze it carefully. There is the recommendation, for instance, that the METTAG be smaller, and there are good reasons for it. And there is also the recommendation that the METTAG be considerably larger, and there are



good reasons for that too. There are other excellent suggestions most of which will not be used mainly because we can't go two directions at the same time and because we now have a *standard tag*. The Journal of Civil Defense *must keep that standard in good faith to its customers*, and in order to promote our objective of supporting as best we can the rescue and transport operation. They say in METTAG advertising that in doing this METTAG saves lives, and this idea is constantly before us all."

Aside from being a *standard tag* METTAG has other features such as a four-color priority coding, individual serial numbers, tear-off portions also serially numbered, weather and water resistant card stock, and plastic ties through metal grommets. Its use of international symbols instead of language means that it is not dependent on any one language or even on levels of literacy. With these large symbols even poor visibility and the precious time required to read instructions are no longer disabling handicaps.

"One thing to remember," says Blodgett, "is that when the *Journal* priced METTAGs in 1975 it tried to cut cost to the consumer as low as possible without cutting quality. It achieved this thanks to a good bit of bargaining and working within a non-profit setup. This left no room for inflation and increases in costs of materials, services and labor that has come about. So modest price increases of between 10 and 15 per cent on January 1, 1977 are inevitable. I think it is a real tribute to our METTAG workers and their efficiency that the increases are not much more."

METTAG is revolutionary in that it is simple and functional and flexible. Common remarks are: "This is just what we've been hunting for without knowing it." And: "Why didn't someone think of this before?" It's also revolutionary in that it's a turnaround from many detailed, time-consuming and complicated tags in several copies which can be excellent for controlled hospital use



but which in field conditions are only rarely successful. These latter can crank confusion and deadly delay into the rescue operation. METTAG *standardization* means that rescue and medical teams from different places can use the same tag and can be familiar with one tagging procedure. That alone significantly boosts effective life-saving capabilities.

"METTAG," says one critic, "is way ahead of its time. It wasn't really expected or due until the 21st Century. Thank God we got it 25 years in advance."

Remarks like that make METTAG people feel that the project is well worth the long years of effort. □

For Further Information and Free METTAG Sample Write: METTAG, c/o Journal of Civil Defense  
PO Box 910, Starke, FL 32091  
(Phone: 904/964-5397)

#### METTAG PRICE LIST – Effective Jan. 1, 1978

Quantity	Price Per Tag	Net Price	Shipping/Handling	Total Cost	*Pre-Jan. 1, 1978 Total Cost
50	39c	19.50	\$1.45	20.95	18.75
100	33c	33.00	2.25	35.25	30.95
200	29c	58.00	2.95	60.95	54.55
300	27c	81.00	3.55	84.55	72.10
400	24c	96.00	4.15	100.15	87.60
500	21c	105.00	4.50	109.50	98.90
1,000	20c	200.00	8.90	208.90	187.75
5,000	19c	950.00	31.65	981.65	877.50
10,000	19c	1,900.00	63.30	1,963.30	1,755.00

Note: Florida orders please supply tax exemption number or add sales tax to net price and include in total cost.

Foreign orders – except Canada – please double shipping cost to allow for increased charges and include in total cost.

\*These prices good only for orders postmarked prior to January 1, 1978.