

## **Mass Fatality Response Plan**

OFFICE OF THE CORONER  
PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE

**A MASS FATALITY DISASTER IS DEFINED AS AN OCCURANCE OF MULTIPLE DEATHS THAT OVERWHELMS THE USUAL ROUTINE CAPABILITIES OF THE COMMUNITY.**

Mass fatality disaster response is separate from, and secondary to search and rescue operations. Mass fatality response should begin only after all survivors of the incident have been moved to safety.

Primary concerns of mass fatality response are: recovery, identification of human remains, determination of cause, and manner of death, and aid to distressed families.

ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE COLLECTION, IDENTIFICATION, STORAGE, AND DISPATCH OF HUMAN REMAINS LIES WITH THE CORONER AS SET FORTH BY LAW.

Mitigation efforts consist of predesignation of temporary morgue sites and the development of mutual aid agreements with surrounding parishes and other entities able to provide assistance. It is also necessary to preplan and provide for specialized training and equipment for the Coroner's Office.

The recovery operations are divided into four phases. The phases are equally important and are conducted concurrently.

- Phase one: Initial evaluation of scene/determination of equipment needs.
- Phase two: Morgue establishment and operations.
- Phase three: Family assistance/critical stress debriefing.
- Phase four: Body recovery.

In the event that a mass casualty disaster should occur within the Parish of East Baton Rouge, the Coroner's Command Response Team shall be immediately activated. This Team shall consist of the Coroner, Chief of Operations, and a Medico-Legal Investigator. The Response Team is responsible for the initial scene evaluation and for the establishment and coordination of all other phases of the recovery effort.

## PHASE ONE

Initial evaluation of scene/determination of equipment needs.

A. The Response Team shall conduct an immediate evaluation to determine needs and dangers including the following:

- \_\_\_\_1. Identification of possible chemical, biological, nuclear, and/or primary and secondary incendiary hazards.
- \_\_\_\_2. Equipment needed to ensure the safety of responders.
- \_\_\_\_3. The number of fatalities
- \_\_\_\_4. The condition of human remains
- \_\_\_\_5. Accessibility of the scene and equipment necessary to begin recovery operations.
- \_\_\_\_6. Determine location for family assistance center. Consideration should include the need to possibly house family members.
- \_\_\_\_7. Determine location for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing for responders.
- \_\_\_\_8. Determine need to call in D-mort.
- \_\_\_\_9. Determine location and staffing needs for temporary morgue.
- \_\_\_\_10. Have needed supplies and equipment delivered to site.

## PHASE TWO

Establish morgue operations. The Command and Control Team in the morgue shall consist of

A. MORGUE OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

- \_\_\_\_1. Reports to the Chief of Operations.
- \_\_\_\_2. Responsible for directing all morgue operations and reporting status.

B. IDENTIFICATION OFFICER

- \_\_\_\_1. Reports to Morgue Operations Director.

\_\_\_\_2. Responsible for all operations relating to establishing the identity of human remains.

a. Stations reporting to the Identification Officer are:

\_\_\_\_1) Anatomical charting/autopsy  
Forensic pathologist  
Assistants

\_\_\_\_2.) Fingerprinting  
Fingerprint technicians

\_\_\_\_3.) Dental  
Forensic Odontologist  
Assistants

\_\_\_\_4.) Radiology  
Technicians  
Assistants

\_\_\_\_5.) Photography  
Photographers  
Assistants

\_\_\_\_6. Optional stations  
Toxicology  
Anthropology

#### C. RECORDS OFFICER

\_\_\_\_1. Reports to Morgue Operations Director.

\_\_\_\_2. Responsible for collecting and coordinating all logs associated with morgue operations.

#### D. PERSONAL EFFECTS OFFICER

\_\_\_\_1. Reports to the Identification Officer.

\_\_\_\_2. Responsible for cataloguing, storage, and disposition of all personal effects as they arrive at the morgue.

#### E. PREPARATION OFFICER

\_\_\_\_1. Reports to Morgue Operations Director.

\_\_\_\_2. Responsible for the preparation of human remains for release to funeral home. This process may include embalming, and or containerizing,

dependant on the nature, size, and location of the disaster, and the number and condition of human remains.

F. NEXT OF KIN RECEPTION OFFICER

- \_\_\_\_1. Reports to the Morgue Operations Director.
- \_\_\_\_2. Responsible for providing a reception area for next of kin and all related needs (telephone, **American** Red Cross assistance, counseling, etc.). Works closely with Identification Officer.

G. MORGUE RESOURCE OFFICER

- \_\_\_\_1. Reports to the Morgue Operations Director.
- \_\_\_\_2. Responsible for obtaining all equipment, supplies, and other resources related to morgue operations.

H. SECURITY OFFICER

- \_\_\_\_1. Reports to the Morgue Operations Director.
- \_\_\_\_2. Responsible for all security operations.

<b>PHASE THREE</b>
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A. Family Assistance Center/ Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- \_\_\_\_1. A family assistance center shall be established.
- \_\_\_\_2. The F.A.C. must be physically separated from the disaster scene.
- \_\_\_\_3. Responsibilities of the center shall include:
  - \_\_\_\_a. Gathering of ante mortem information.
  - \_\_\_\_b. Sharing information with families.
  - \_\_\_\_c. Developing an official notification process.
  - \_\_\_\_d. Helping to provide information and services to families in the days following the incident.

B. FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER (F.A.C.) TEAM LEADER

- \_\_\_\_1. Reports to the Chief of Operations.

- \_\_\_\_2. Responsible for the Coroner portion of F.A.C. operation.
- \_\_\_\_3. Communicates and liaises with the Records Officer to ensure all possible ante mortem information is gathered and disseminated in a timely manner.
- \_\_\_\_4. Responsible for ensuring that family notification occurs as soon as a positive identification of remains is established and for ensuring the privacy and security of families.

C. CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING TEAM

- \_\_\_\_1. The Team Leader reports to the Chief of Operations.
- \_\_\_\_2. Responsible for establishing a stress debriefing program and for ensuring that all responders receive necessary counseling.
- \_\_\_\_3. The Team Leader will monitor the mental health of workers and take actions as indicated.
- \_\_\_\_4. He/she will also interact with other mental health professionals to ensure smooth operations.

<b>PHASE FOUR</b>
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SCENE SECURITY/BODY RECOVERY

A. SCENE SECURITY

- 1. Security at the scene of mass fatality disasters is critical to the success of all operations. The scene must be clearly delineated and rules of access must be established and strictly enforced in order to perform the following missions:
  - \_\_\_\_a. Maintain scene integrity.
  - \_\_\_\_b. Maintain chain of custody of evidentiary items.
  - \_\_\_\_c. Prevent scene workers from being disturbed.
  - \_\_\_\_d. Control unauthorized volunteers who may rush to the scene in an attempt to render aid.
  - \_\_\_\_e. Maintain the dignity and privacy of families.

\_\_\_\_\_f. Prevent public/media from witnessing/publicizing the condition of remains.

2. SCENE ACCESS:

\_\_\_\_\_a. Establish an I.D. procedure for everyone entering or leaving the scene.

\_\_\_\_\_b. Maintain an accurate count of all workers.

\_\_\_\_\_c. Change I.D. procedure daily to foil unauthorized persons attempting to gain entry.

\_\_\_\_\_d. Armed guards should protect remains in order to prevent tampering/looting

\_\_\_\_\_e. Establish traffic patterns for all incoming and outgoing vehicles.

3. SCENE OPERATIONS:

\_\_\_\_\_a. A grid map should be prepared prior to the start of recovery operations. This may be done by computer gridding, laser equipment, or through the use of surveying equipment.

\_\_\_\_\_b. All items/remains should be flagged, numbered, and photographed in place.

\_\_\_\_\_c. The locations of items/remains and their assigned number should be located on the grid map prior to collection.

\_\_\_\_\_d. All responders must exercise UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS for infectious disease control.

\_\_\_\_\_e. Personal effects and property disposition:

\_\_\_\_\_1.) The collection, identification, and disposition of the personal effects of deceased victims in a mass fatality incident are conducted concurrently with the collection, identification, and disposition of human remains.

\_\_\_\_\_f. Procedure for property recovery:

\_\_\_\_\_1.) Should be handled by recovery personnel concurrently with the recovery of remains.

- \_\_\_\_\_2.) Careful collection and location plotting of personal effects found at a disaster site is crucial to the preservation of clues of ownership.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. Property found on remains must stay with the recovered remains. When property is found close to remains it must be tagged to identify its location in relationship to the remains. Personal effects should be photographed prior to removal.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Items should be placed in clear plastic bags for easy identification. An identification number should be placed on each bag.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. A special secure area is needed for processing unidentified (as to ownership) personal effects. **Special security is required in this area.**
- \_\_\_\_\_6. When recording items use basic descriptions. Never make assumptions as to what an item is. A ring should be described as “yellow metal with a clear stone” not “gold with a diamond”
- \_\_\_\_\_7. If possible all personal effects should be released to next of kin.
- \_\_\_\_\_8. All unidentified personal effects should remain under control of the Coroner or his designee.

## B. BODY RECOVERY

### 1. RECOVERY OF REMAINS:

- \_\_\_\_\_a. No remains shall be moved, or touched by workers until direction and approval have been given by the Coroner, unless necessary for officer safety or to prevent further damage to the remains.
- \_\_\_\_\_b. All operations will be coordinated by the Coroner or his designee.
- \_\_\_\_\_c. A survey of the scene will be made by the Coroner or his designee. The scene survey will include:
  - \_\_\_\_\_1) Approximate number of dead
  - \_\_\_\_\_2) Condition of the remains
  - \_\_\_\_\_3) Environmental conditions

- \_\_\_\_\_4) Type of terrain
- \_\_\_\_\_5) An estimate of the number of personnel necessary to implement an effective recovery plan.
- \_\_\_\_\_d. Once workers have reported to the staging area a briefing will be held, assignments made, and if appropriate workers will be divided into teams.
- \_\_\_\_\_e. Photographs/video or a sketch will be made of the disaster site.
  - \_\_\_\_\_1). If necessary the site will be divided into sections with recovery teams assigned as needed.
  - \_\_\_\_\_2). All remains should be photographed and grid marked prior to recovery.
- \_\_\_\_\_f. Suitable stakes or flags will be placed at the location of each body or body part and the flags will be numbered.
  - \_\_\_\_\_1). These flags should remain in place after collection of the items to be recovered.
  - \_\_\_\_\_2). All remains must be identified with a number.
    - Complete bodies should be prefixed with the letter “B”
    - Body parts should be prefixed with the letter “P”
    - Personal effects should be prefixed with the letter “E”
- \_\_\_\_\_g. Remains or body parts will be tagged with waterproof tags and records kept as to the location or surroundings in which the remains were found.
- \_\_\_\_\_h. Unattached personal effects found on or near the body will be placed in a container, tagged with the corresponding numbers and data reflecting the location and will be secured.
- \_\_\_\_\_i. When practical remains and/or body parts will be containerized in a body pouch and corresponding numbers painted on the pouch.
- \_\_\_\_\_j. Valuables such as wallets or jewelry that are attached to the body shall not be removed. Such valuables found on or near the body that have potential identification value should be placed in a container and charted as to the exact location of recovery.

\_\_\_\_\_k. Remains may then be removed as authorized from the initial discovery site to a staging area for transport to the morgue.

## 2. TRANSPORTATION OF REMAINS

\_\_\_\_\_a. The transfer of remains to the morgue should be handled discretely using closed vehicles if possible.

\_\_\_\_\_b. All names or logos on transport vehicles will be removed or covered.

\_\_\_\_\_c. Transport vehicles should follow the same route to the morgue moving in convoy and escorted by law enforcement.

\_\_\_\_\_d. Records will be kept at the staging area as to the identity of the driver and the tag numbers of the deceased being transported.

\_\_\_\_\_e. Documentation will also be kept at the morgue.

\_\_\_\_\_f. Bodies and body parts should be stored in refrigerated trucks until transported to the morgue.

\_\_\_\_\_1) These trucks should have metal floors and wall.

\_\_\_\_\_2) No company names should be visible on these vehicles.

\_\_\_\_\_3) The bags should be opened to verify tag and bag numbers. The bodies or body parts should be logged with the log entry containing bag number, vehicle number, driver's name, and time of dispatch.

\_\_\_\_\_4) The driver should verify and sign the log entry. The remains are then transported to the morgue.

**These activities are continued until all possible recoveries have been completed.**

## UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

The assumption behind the universal precautions for infectious disease control is that every direct contact with body fluids is infectious. Therefore every person exposed to direct contact must take precautions.

At a mass fatalities incident this would include all workers involved in search, recovery, transportation, body identification, and disposition. Universal precautions apply to blood, tissue,

and body fluids containing visible blood, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, amniotic fluid, pleural fluid, synovia fluid, pericardial fluid, and peritoneal fluids.

A. Universal precautions include:

- \_\_\_\_\_1. Needles and sharps should never be resheathed, bent, broken, cut, or removed from disposable syringes. They should be placed in a rigid puncture resistant disposable container with a lid and a prominent biohazard label.
- \_\_\_\_\_2. Hand washing - use hand friction and thorough rinsing after contact with victims.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. Double gloving- use heavy-duty gloves and replace latex gloves if working long periods and washing frequently.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Facial barriers/respirator full face shields or goggles with a plastic cushion seal over mouth and nose.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. Disposable protective apparel kits are mandated by O.S.H.A. for funeral directors when embalming infectious disease victims. Gowns, aprons, and lab coats should have long sleeves with a closed or full button front.

<b>RESOURCES</b>
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D-Mort Team

Phone: 800-872-6367  
Contact: Buddy Bell

Louisiana Mass Fatality Task Force

Phone: 342-1588  
Contact: Cindy Montz

Louisiana Funeral Directors Association

Phone: (504) 892-3166 / (504) 662-5272  
(504) 489-2174 pager  
Contact: John Vickers

Forensic Anthropologist

Phone: 388-6084  
Contact: Mary Manhein

Forensic Odontologist

Phone: (504) 619-8551

Contact: Bob Barsley

Ronnie Carr

## DEFINITIONS

### Coroner's Command Response Team

A command and initial evaluation team consisting of the Coroner, Chief of Operations and Chief Investigator.

### Disaster Mortuary Team (D-Mort)

A federal disaster mortuary unit provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This team has a response time of approximately eight (8) to twelve (12) hours.

### Mass Fatality

An occurrence of multiple deaths that overwhelms the usual routing capabilities of the community.

### Medico-Legal Investigator

A person who is registered with the American Board of Medico-Legal Death Investigators.