Mass Fatalities Incident Overview

- Definitions
- Experiences
- Next Steps
- Planning Issues
Three Incident Classifications

1. **Disasters**
   - Events producing results that cannot be managed with locally available resources in a day-to-day manner
   - May be limited to property damage
2. **Mass Casualties**
   - Multiple victims requiring intervention by medical responders
   - Generally considered to include a large number of injured but not dead
Incident Classifications

3. Mass Fatalities
   • Overwhelms locally available resources

   Mass Fatalities vs. Multiple Fatalities

   • Threshold is different for each community

   • Factors -
     Number of deaths
     Scope of destruction
     Available resources
     Rate of recovery
     Prior Planning and Training
What is a Mass Fatalities Incident?

An incident that produces more fatalities than can be managed with locally available resources.
Three Major Operational Areas

1. **Search and Recovery Operations**
   (Recovery of human remains, personal effects & evidence)

2. **Morgue Services/Victim Identification Center**
   (Identification, processing, and disposition of human remains)

3. **Family Assistance Center**
   (Support of surviving family members)

Consider a fourth operational area – **Staff Support** (caring for responders). A mass fatalities incident may significantly affect responders resulting in long term mental and physical health issues. Responder safety is CRITICAL!
1. Search and Recovery Operations
Search and Recovery Operations

• Who’s in charge?
• All disasters happen at the local level and responsibility for the management of a mass fatalities incident (MFI) is a local responsibility.
• A MFI is just one part of the overall response
• Possibility of conflict
  (Rescue v. Recovery Missions)
• Evaluation of the incident site and available resources
• ESF8 partners
Search and Recovery Operations

- Logistics of response
  (Including meals, lodging, transportation)
- Operational plan?
- PPE?
- Evidence/Personal Effects
- Public Health/DSHS
- Security/Media concerns
- Transport/Transfer
- DMORT/NTSB
- NWS – weather conditions
2. Morgue Services
Victim Identification Center (VIC)

Temporary Morgue
Morgue Services/VIC

- Location
- Equipment needs
- Qualified Personnel
- Security concerns
- Roles
- Responsibilities
- Termination of Mission
Establish Scientific/Forensic Protocols

1. Detailed Descriptions of
   - Who, What & How
2. Who Receives a Full Criminal Autopsy?
3. What Constitutes a Positive ID?
4. Who signs Death Certificates?
5. Documentation Requirements
6. Who notifies the family once a victim has been identified?
3. Family Assistance Center
Family Assistance Center

- Challenges
  - Logistics – support services
  - Political, cultural and religious
  - Mental and physical health issues
  - Media/Security
  - Financial

- Anticipate
  - Needs of survivors
  - How will people respond?
Family Assistance Center

- Timely and accurate information is critical
- Regularly scheduled briefings
- Interpreters
- Planning & Preparedness
- Confidentiality/Privacy
- IT Support – Communications
- Volunteer coordination/supervision
- American Red Cross?
- Ramping down – ongoing services
Family Assistance Center Example
Experience tells us.....

Traditional mass fatalities experiences have involved conventional incidents

- Commercial air crashes (Majority)
- Natural disasters (tornado, tsunami, hurricane)
- Fire (intentional or accidental)
- Focused violence (active shooter)
Conventional Mass Fatalities Events

**Response** -
Peaks in **Hours to Days**

**Recovery** -
Peaks in **Weeks to Months**
Extraordinary Events

NYC 9-11, OKC Murrah Bldg. Pandemic

- Large numbers of fatalities
- Multiple incident sites
- May span several jurisdictions
- Extended response
- Will assuredly involve outside agencies including a Federal response
- Managed as crime or environmental scene
- Risk may exist until remediation is complete
Extraordinary Events

• Possible natural origins
• Pandemic Influenza
• Imposition of isolation or quarantine
• Uncontained and capable of spreading
• Scope may be a function of epidemiologic modeling
• Contaminated victims
• Temporary Internment
• Possibility of forced disposition of remains
• Unassociated tissue burial
Extraordinary Mass Fatalities Events

Response - Peaks in weeks to months

Recovery - Peaks in months to years
Next Steps/Planning Issues

• Create local mass fatalities planning group or include mass fatalities response planning in current LEPC meetings
• Get Justice of the Peace, Funeral Home Directors and other death industry professionals involved
• Understand laws and regulations that govern mass fatalities response
• Review the Texas Department of State Health Services Fatalities Management for Catastrophic Incidents Response Operating Guidelines and Mass Fatalities Management Toolkit
Next Steps/Planning Issues

- Incorporate NIMS in local plans and response
- Determine roles and responsibilities
- Plan for operation with diminished staff
- Discuss local religious beliefs and customs
- Training and exercise your mass fatalities incident response
- Identify potential locations for morgue or family assistance center
- Explore refrigerated storage alternatives
Planning Issues - Resources

- Mutual Aid / Neighboring JP
- Funeral Directors / Mortuary Services
- Law Enforcement/Fire/EMS/Public Works
- Emergency Management (County/State)
- DSHS Response Teams / Texas State Guard
- Private-Sector / National Weather Service
- American Red Cross / Salvation Army
- CERT / Baptist Men’s / BCFS
- RAC / MHMR / MMRS / Hospitals
- Emergency Management Assistance Compact
Other Planning Issues

- Volunteer / Donations management
- Joint Information Center planning
- Traumatic stress / Psychological First Aid and CISM for responders
- WMD – radiological contamination
- COMPLETE A LOCAL PLAN!!!
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Thank You

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