JPs/Clerks Class: Mass Fatality Response in Texas

Wednesday, June 26, 2019
3:15–4 p.m

Ms. Allison C. Reese,
Manager of Emergency Management
Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences

This session will address mass fatality response operational objectives and the support available through the Texas Mass Fatality Operations Response Team.
Allison C. Reese, Manager of Emergency Management, Harris County Institute of Forensic Scientists, Houston

Allison C. Reese serves as manager of Emergency Management at the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences. She manages the Institute’s emergency preparedness and response program for internal operations as well as coordination with external partner agencies, which includes fatality management, continuity of operations, severe weather response and other plans. Reese is also responsible for regional mass fatality management education and collaboration, including coordinating the nationwide Mass Fatality Management Symposium in Houston and numerous other workshops and conferences. Reese is a founding member of the Texas Mass Fatality Operations Team (TMORT) Steering Committee, a member of the Texas Medical Incident Support Team and executive secretary for the Organization of Scientific Area Committee Disaster Victim Identification Subcommittee. In 2014, Reese earned her certification as a Master Exercise Practitioner (MEP) from FEMA’s Emergency Management Institute.
Texas Emergency Medical Task Force
Component Overview

The TX EMTF Program is a series of components that activate resources on behalf of Texas on a State Mission Assignment (SMA) that provides a custom, scalable approach to medical disaster response. The key to the program is the ability to activate our members from EMS & fire departments, public and private healthcare organizations, regional coalitions, & state and local government who provide personnel & assets that activate during disasters.

For more information, visit www.TXEMTF.org or contact your Regional Coordinator:

EMTF 1: www.PanhandleRAC.com
EMTF 2: www.NCTTRAC.org
EMTF 4: www.RAC-G.org
EMTF 6: www.SETRAC.org
EMTF 7: www.CATRAC.org
EMTF 8: www.STRAC.org
EMTF 9: www.BorderRAC.org
EMTF 11: www.CBRAC.org
State Coordinating Office: www.TXEMTF.org
Texas Emergency Medical Task Force
Component Overview

MISSION

- Provide operational assistance to medicolegal authorities with incident site, deployable morgue, victim identification center, & victim information center operations following a mass fatality incident that overwhelms a local jurisdiction.

CAPABILITIES

- Available statewide as an activated, 24/7 response asset
- TMORT is composed of [4] teams that can deploy independently or all at once on behalf of the State:
  - **Incident Site Team (IST)**: Conduct scene investigations to locate, document, & recover human remains & personal effects. **Staffing**: Human Remains Recovery, Mapping, & Evidence Tracking Specialists
  - **Morgue Operations Team (MOT)**: Conduct disaster morgue operations to examine human remains. **Staffing**: Admitting, Triage, Storage, Personal Effects, Photographers, Radiographers, Pathologists, Autopsy Assistants, Dentists, Anthropologists, DNA & Fingerprint Specialists, & Exit Review. [Disaster Portable Morgue Unit is maintained by SETRAC in Houston]
  - **Identification Review Team (IRT)**: Compares antemortem & postmortem data to identify human remains. **Staffing**: Dependent on the ID methods used, & could include Anthropologists, DNA Scientists, Fingerprint Analysts, Pathologists, Odontologists, &/or Death Investigators.
  - **Victim Information Center Team (VICT)**: Conducts family interviews, gathers antemortem data, & collects DNA samples. **Staffing**: Family Interviewers, Records Collection & Management, Personal Effects, & DNA Reference Collectors.
  - TMORT will collaborate with jurisdictions in the set-up of Family Assistance Centers [FAC] however, FAC staffing & operations are the jurisdiction’s responsibility.
  - Medical examiners’ offices, academic institutions, & private entities provide the deployable team members for the TMORT.

TYPING

- Matrix for determining TMORT team requests:
  [scaled & typed by fatality count & incident variables]

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- **Type I Teams:**

- **Type II Teams:**

- **Type III Teams:**

- **Type IV Teams:** all teams
TEXAS DEATH INVESTIGATION SYSTEM

- No state medical examiner
- 254 counties
  - 13 Medical Examiner Offices serve 16 counties
  - 4 private forensic pathology service companies
  - 600+ Justices of the Peace
- Variation in resources, capabilities, training, funding, etc
MASS FATALITY INCIDENTS: 2000-2018

Total Incidents: 3,707
Total Fatalities: 23,964
Avg. Deaths/MFI: 6.5

MASS SHOOTINGS: 2000-2019
TEXAS MASS FATALITY INCIDENTS: 2000-2018

Total Incidents: 106
Total Fatalities: 600
Avg. Deaths/MFI: 5.7

WHY TMORT?

NC agency: State liable for medical examiner’s body swap error
Coroner: Misidentification Began With Students’ ID Cards
Identification Of Crash Survivor, Dead Woman, Mixed Up Weeks

A Dead Woman Was Misidentified By A Medical Examiner
March 20, 2014 4:17 PM
Filed Under: Laura Baker, Mt. Highway in Spanaway, Pierce County Medical Examiner’s Office, Samantha Kennedy

Coroner: Mixed-up victims tragedy avoidable
Office urged sister not to see body, resulting in misidentification, he says

Lawsuit: Wrong family got body because of misidentification
By: Troy Renfro
renfro@signon.com · Apr 30, 2013 · 12:55 am

Morgue Mix-Up Leads Mom To Believe Daughter Is Dead
Case of mistaken identity stuns families
Sheriff: Misidentification of woman killed by deputies 'tragic'

Mix-up at medical examiner’s office leaves wrong body cremated
State launches investigation, places employee on administrative leave

Macabre body ID process adds to Joplin’s pain
Ind. coroner regrets case of mistaken ID
Mistaken identity case puts spotlight on coroners
EMERGENCY MEDICAL TASK FORCE

- Statewide system supported by the TX Department of State Health Services
- Comprised of local agencies with Memorandums of Agreement to provide staff when requested (can decline)
- State missions begin with the authority having jurisdiction requesting TX EMTF assets through the standard Emergency Management resource requesting process
- Sponsoring entities are reimbursed for vehicles, equipment, and personnel when deployed as a state mission assignment
TMORT COMPONENTS

INCIDENT SITE TEAM

OPERATIONS
- Scene documentation (including mapping and photography)
- Decedent numbering system
- Search and recovery of human remains
- Collection of associated personal effects
- Evidence inventory maintenance
- On scene coordination with investigating agencies

TEAM ROLES
- Site Supervisor
- Evidence Tracking Specialists
- Mapping Specialists
- Human Remains Recovery Specialists
MORGUE OPERATIONS TEAM

OPERATIONS
- Triage of human remains from the site
- Radiographs and photographs of human remains
- Postmortem examination of remains for trauma and identification
- Additional examination of the decedent by experts for identification
- Inventory and documentation of associated personal effects
- Short-term storage of human remains for the duration of the TMORT operation

TEAM ROLES
- Morgue Supervisor
- Triage and Admitting
- Photography
- Radiography
- Fingerprint
- Pathology
- Anthropology
- Odontology
- DNA
- Temporary Storage
- Quality Control / Exit Review

DISASTER PORTABLE MORGUE UNIT
DEPLOYABLE EQUIPMENT

- Disaster Portable Morgue Unit (managed and housed by SETRAC)
  - Warehouse or other open facility
  - Tents (Zumros)
- Mobile Autopsy Trailer
  - Augment existing resources or compromised infrastructure
- Mortuary Enhanced Remains Cooling Systems (MERCS)
  - Mobile refrigerated storage
- Storage trailers
  - Refrigerated
  - Non-refrigerated with MERCS
- Computers
  - Networked systems for VIC

VICTIM INFORMATION CENTER TEAM

OPERATIONS
- VIC management and coordination with Family Assistance Center
- Interview of families and friends of victims reported missing
- Medical records acquisition
- DNA familial sample and victim reference specimen collection
- Remains release

TEAM ROLES
- VIC Supervisor
- Family Interviewers
- Antemortem Records Collection
- DNA Reference Collection
- Antemortem Data Management
- Personal Effects
IDENTIFICATION REVIEW TEAM

OPERATIONS

• Victim identification center management
• Identification methodology comparison
• Victim identification
• Records management
• Quality assurance

TEAM ROLES

• ID Supervisor
• Identification Review Team Specialist

SCALABILITY OF TMORT

• TMORT is designed to be adjustable to respond to the needs of the jurisdiction and incident
• Each team is “typed” to detail which assets (personnel, equipment, and supplies) deploy with each team type
• Even these typed teams are adjustable
• Single resources are also available to be deployed
• All teams deploy with a Support Services Team

Matrix Guide for Determining TMORT Team Request

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complex Incident Variables</th>
<th>High Fatality Count</th>
<th>Low Fatality Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple Incident Variables</th>
<th>Estimated 100 locations</th>
<th>Estimated 50 locations</th>
<th>Estimated 25 locations</th>
<th>Estimated 10 locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-locations</td>
<td>Contaminated</td>
<td>Choked</td>
<td>Fractured, Contaminated</td>
<td>Wound, Visually Recognizable</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Typing Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Type I</th>
<th>Type II</th>
<th>Type III</th>
<th>Type IV</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Function Primary Mission</td>
<td>Search, documentation, and recovery of 0-100 decedents, &quot;as is matrix&quot;</td>
<td>Search, documentation, and recovery of 101-150 decedents, &quot;as is matrix&quot;</td>
<td>Search, documentation, and recovery of 151-200 decedents, &quot;as is matrix&quot;</td>
<td>Search, documentation, and recovery of 201-250 decedents, &quot;as is matrix&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capability</td>
<td>12 hours operations</td>
<td>12 hours operations</td>
<td>12 hours operations</td>
<td>12 hours operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobilization</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operationally Capable</td>
<td>120 minutes upon arrival at the site</td>
<td>120 minutes upon arrival at the site</td>
<td>120 minutes upon arrival at the site</td>
<td>120 minutes upon arrival at the site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity Number of Crew</td>
<td>25 - person response (5 Support Specialists)</td>
<td>17 - person response (5 Support Specialists)</td>
<td>15 - person response (5 Support Specialists)</td>
<td>Single resource requests to augment existing infrastructure:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Incident Site Group Supervisor (2) HR Recovery Specialist (3) Mapping Specialist (4) Evidence Tracking Specialist</td>
<td>(1) Incident Site Group Supervisor (2) HR Recovery Specialist (3) Mapping Specialist (4) Evidence Tracking Specialist</td>
<td>(1) Incident Site Group Supervisor (2) HR Recovery Specialist (3) Mapping Specialist (4) Evidence Tracking Specialist</td>
<td>Field Ops Advisor</td>
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<td>40,000 ft²: 200' x 200'</td>
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<td>Equipment Command Vehicles Mobile Command Post Rehab Trailer</td>
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<td>Mobile Command Post</td>
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### Services Not Supported by TMORT

- Mortuary (funerary) services
- Family Assistance Center staffing such as childcare, feeding, spiritual, or behavioral health care
- Human remains transportation operations
- Long term human remains storage operations (pre- and post-processing)
- Manage unassociated personal effects
- Seek medicolegal authority in any local jurisdiction
- ESF 6-Mass Care services (shelter, housing, feeding, etc)
**TMORT PARTNERSHIPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texas Funeral Directors Association</th>
<th>EMTF Support Services Team</th>
<th>Family Assistance Center Support Team</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide Strike Teams to assist with body recovery, transport, establishment of a holding morgue, and the recovery and transport of disinterred caskets</td>
<td>• A deployable resource that may be activated during various EMTF deployments, including a mass fatality incident</td>
<td>• A 1 or 2 person deployable resource for use during a mass fatality incident that will provide consultation to local jurisdictions establishing an FAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assist in determining what local response resources are available and any gaps</td>
<td>• Provides logistics support to the TMORT teams to include communications and information technology, lodging, laundry, meals, and water</td>
<td>• Assists in determining appropriate location</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain 3 morgue trailers each stocked with supplies and equipment for response</td>
<td>• Provides facility and infrastructure management, maintenance of equipment, requisition, receipt, issue, and tracking of equipment and supplies, and manages the logistical support area</td>
<td>• Provide guidance on: media, site security, stations within the FAC (intake, interview rooms, behavioral health), and agencies that can assist with operational components</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**TMORT TYPE IV DEPLOYMENT**

SAN MARCOS, TX | JULY, 2018

Fifth body recovered from San Marcos apartment fire, authorities say

Bodies have not been identified; 5 residents remain unaccounted for
CONTACT US

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