

# 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

# Incident Classifications

## 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**

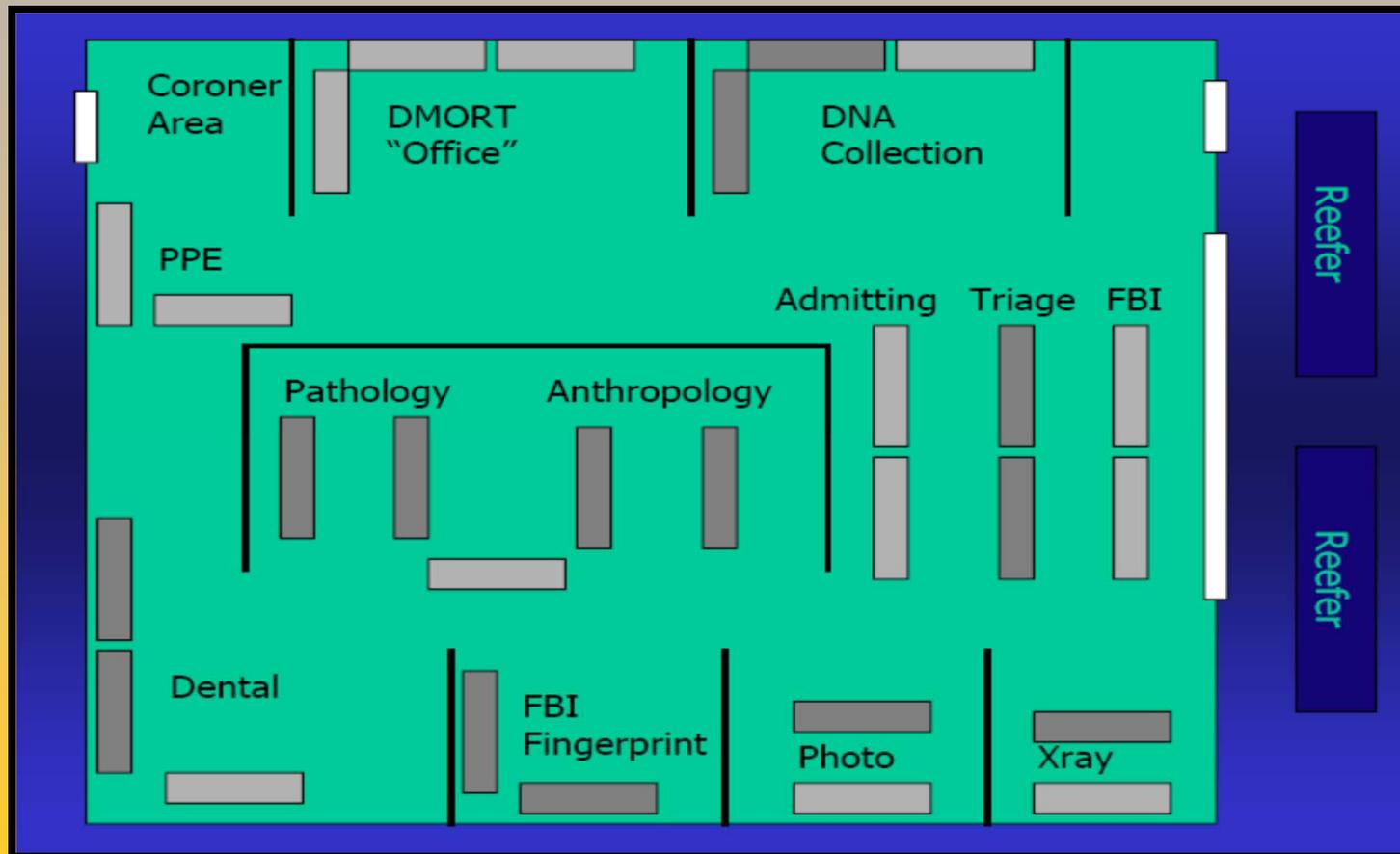


## 2. Morgue Services Victim Identification Center (VIC)

**Temporary  
Morgue**



# Morgue/VIC Design Example



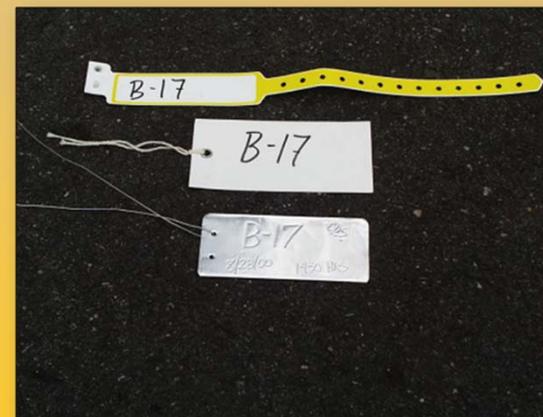
# Morgue Services/VIC

- **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



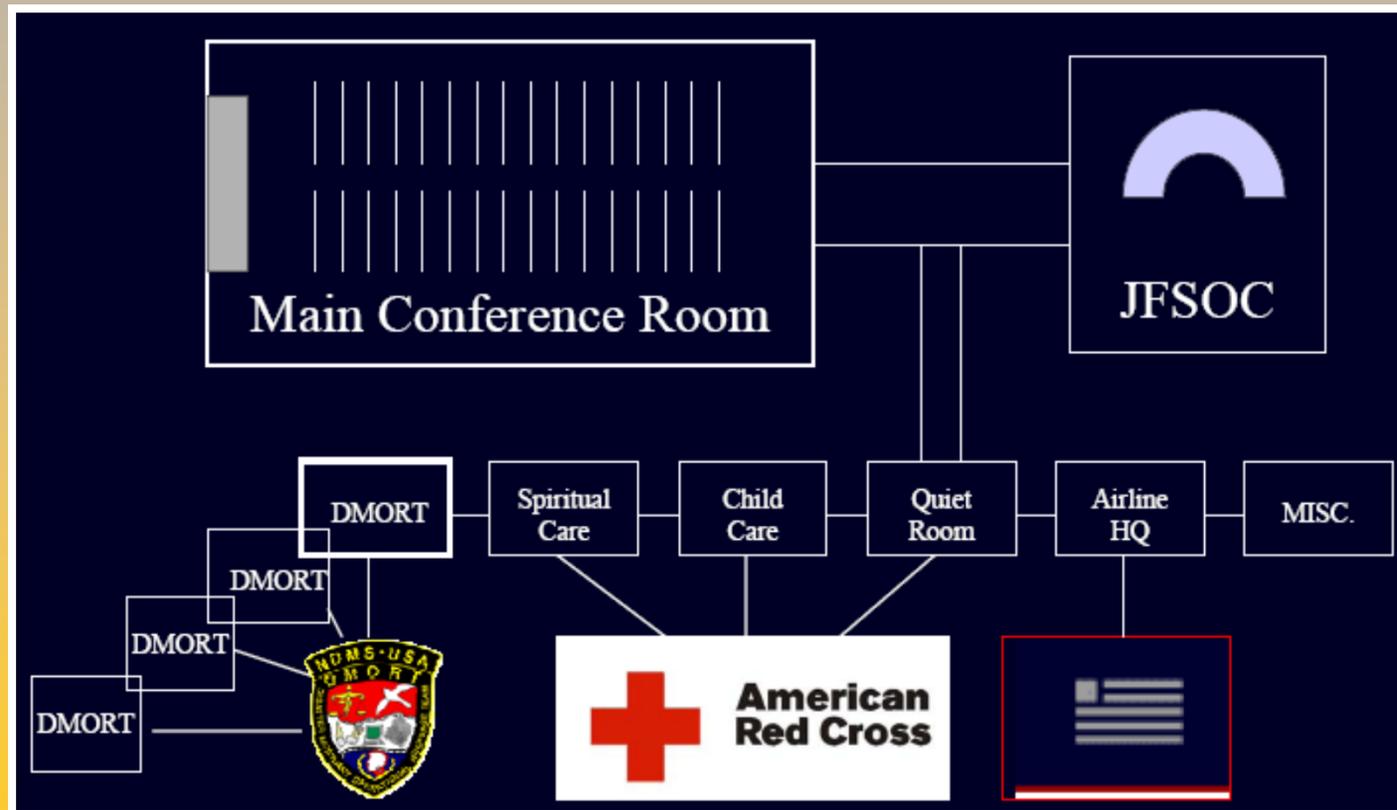
# Family Assistance Center

- **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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