FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

BUILDING CENTERS FOR COMPASSION
The infamous Hurricane of 1900 struck Galveston shores on September 8, 1900, killing 8,000-12,000 people in its wake. It is still the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history, and awakened Galveston citizens to the importance of having a seawall to shield them from future storms. To put the death toll into perspective, the 1900 Galveston Hurricane took the lives of more people than the total of all those killed in every tropical cyclone to make landfall in the U.S. since. Ranked a Category 4 storm, it had sustained winds of 145 mph, and caused $104.3 billion (2010 USD) in damage, making it the second costliest hurricane in U.S. history. While we may not have experienced the storm firsthand, us Texans can only imagine the sheer destruction that this storm caused, and are forever humbled by the power of Mother Nature.
On April 16, 1947, the French ship SS Grandcamp docked at a port in Texas City caught fire and eventually exploded, leading to at least 581 fatalities and 5,000 injuries. The ship was carrying 2,300 tons of ammonium nitrate, which detonated a little over an hour after smoke was spotted in the cargo hold. The blast leveled 1,000 buildings on land, set refineries and chemical tanks on fire, and brought people to their knees in Galveston, 10 miles away. It caused $1.06 billion in damage, and is considered the worst industrial accident in American history. This anchor from the ship now rests in a Memorial Park in Texas City, and is one of the only artifacts left from the horrific explosion.
3) Hurricane Ike

The third costliest hurricane in U.S. history made its final landfall in Galveston on September 13, 2008. It sent out a 20 foot storm surge in some places on the island, and caused $37.5 billion in damage, as well as at least 195 deaths.
4) Tropical Storm Allison

T.S. Allison was the costliest and deadliest tropical storm in U.S. history, causing 55 deaths and over $10 billion in damage. It formed into a tropical storm on June 5, 2001, and made landfall west of Galveston that night. It sat over Texas for days, dumping over 35 inches of rain in Houston, the city that received the brunt of the damage. Due to extreme destruction, Allison was the only tropical storm in history to have its name retired.
5) The 1953 Waco Tornado

The deadliest tornado in Texas history struck Waco on May 11, 1953, which so happened to be Mother's Day. It touched down in the town of Lorena, moving northeast toward Waco. It grew to nearly 1/3 of a mile wide, and was classified as an F5 twister. The violent tornado killed 114 people and injured 597, and some people had to wait up to 14 hours to be rescued. It destroyed 600 homes and damaged 1000. The impact of the tornado also prompted the Texas Tornado Warning Conference in June 1953, where officials discussed tornado warning systems to prevent future death tolls like that of the Waco tornado.
NEED FOR FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

- In the hours and days after a major disaster incident with mass-casualties or mass-fatalities incident occurs, families and friends will anxiously seek assistance in being locating, reuniting with, accessing information about the event and their loved ones.

- As family members begin to hear about the disaster incident, they will frequently go to the disaster site and/or other places (hospitals) searching for information about the status of their family members.

- This frequently leads to a flood of family members showing up at the incident site, or calling or showing up at local hospitals.
NEED FOR FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

- Additionall, families will begin to make information-seeking calls to 911, 311, hospitals, police, and fire departments or the Medical Examiner’s (ME) Office, creating a significant burden on those agencies already in full crisis response mode with the initial response and coordinating responder call outs and call backs.

- The establishment of a family assistance center is necessary to facilitate the exchange of information and to address the families’ needs. Families and friends may spend many long hours waiting anxiously for information about their loved ones.

- The family assistance center provides the families with accurate information in an appropriate manner and setting.
MISSION

• The primary mission of the FAC is to provide a safe place for crisis intervention, grief support, and timely accurate information, for families of missing persons and victims of the incident.

• To serve as a reunification site/center for family members who need to be reunited with loved ones involved in the incident.

• Facilitate information exchange between the Medical Examiner’s Office and families so that the ME Office can obtain antemortem data needed in identifying the victims.

• Address family’s informational, psychological, spiritual, medical, and logistical needs.

• Provide death notifications to family members in a caring and compassionate manner.

• Assist families in connecting with community resources as needed.

• Set the stage for the long-term recovery phase of the incident.
BASIC PLANNING PRINCIPLES

• There will always be different perspectives among individuals and agencies about the purpose, scope, and priorities of a FAC. Establishing some basic core principles of a FAC will assist the development and keep the planning focused on the priorities that have been established.

• Identify Your Partners Before The Incident.

• In any crisis, critical incident or disaster there is no substitute for prior relationships!

• Developing an FAC plan requires multi-disciplinary coordination and engagement from public, private, Non-Governmental Agencies (NGO’s) organizations.
BASIC PLANNING PRINCIPLES

• DAC IS A SAFE PLACE!

• TO SERVE AND SUPPORT FAMILIES IN THEIR TIME OF NEED BY MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS AND COMFORT OF THE FAMILIES.

• WE ARE ALWAYS HONEST, ONLY GIVE OUT ACCURATE VERIFIED INFORMATION, NEVER SPECULATE OR TELL FAMILIES WHAT YOU THINK MAY HAVE HAPPENED.

• WE CANNOT GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT OR “FIX” THE SITUATION, BUT WE CAN GIVE THEM WHAT THEY NEED BY PROVIDING SUPPORT, PRESENCE, INFORMATION, ASSISTANCE, AND A CALM SENSE OF ORDER DURING THIS TIME OF CRISIS. HELP FAMILIES TO REGAIN SOME CONTROL AND NORMALCY.
• Families will grieve and process information differently. There is not, “right way to grieve” or a “one-size-fits-all” solution for everyone.

• Try to anticipate needs . . . However; we will not be able anticipate every need or issue that will arise. Be flexible and adaptable.

• Because this is a highly sensitive, emotionally strenuous situation, not everyone will be suited to work in at a FAC.

• Set realistic expectations.
CORE ASSUMPTIONS: FRC/FAC

• **Seven to fifteen family members or loved ones will need assistance for each potential victim.**

• **After an incident, family members will immediately call or self-report to the incident site.**

• **Not all family members will come to the FAC. Services need to be available to support and provide information to those who are not physically on site at the FAC.**

• **Coordination among responding agencies about family members will be necessary.**

• **The FAC should be operational, at least with basic services, within several hours after the event.**
• An immediate gathering site or a survivor center may be required to provide a place for families to assemble until an FRC is established.

• The FRC will transition to an FAC usually by the second operational period.

• The FAC may need to operate 24 hours during the initial days after an incident.

• The FAC operations may be long term 10-20 days or longer.

• Family members will have high expectations.

• Victim identification will take multiple days, weeks, months; FAC may close before all human remains are recovered.
FAC Site Selection Considerations:

- Adequate services and utilities.
- Availability: Immediate/Long Term
- Building design must allow for controlled access to the site.
- The FAC needs to have a floor plan serviceable to the effective operations of the FAC. If possible, the FAC should have a separate entrance for its staff so they can check in, be briefed, and receive their assignments before they interact with the families.
FRC/FAC Setup and Operations

Building Infrastructure, Space, and Floor Plan Consideration:

• FAC Command/Operations/Organizational/Department Rooms
• General Reception/Registration For Families Areas
• General Waiting's/Briefing Areas
• Reunification Area/s
• Reflection Room
• Death Notification Rooms and Counseling Rooms
• Medical Area/Childcare Area/Food Services Area
• Personnel Requirements?
Suggested FAC Site Specifications

* Variable numbers will be changed based on number of fatalities entered in row 6 "number of fatalities". If more Meeting Rooms are needed please enter the number of additional meeting rooms required into cell E28.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mass Fatality Incident</th>
<th>Numbers of Fatalities</th>
<th>Total Number of Family/Friends</th>
<th>Incident Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Incident Size is based on the definitions from the Toolkit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room type</th>
<th>Number of Rooms/Areas</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Suggested Square Footage</th>
<th>Square Footage Scaling Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check-in/Reception Area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>10ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Interview/Notification Rooms</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Counseling rooms</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Waiting area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>10ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Briefing Area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>10ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare Area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>30ft²/child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation/Spiritual Care Area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>40ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>10ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Computer/Phone bank room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>30ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>12ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Site Command Area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>30ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command Staff Operations Room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>30ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Health Team Office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>30ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Health Staff Room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>30ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Break Room</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>30ft²/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Meeting Rooms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10ft²/person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Number of Rooms** 27

**Restroom Stalls** 27
GENERAL RECEPTION/REGISTRATION AREAS

The reception and registration area is the first location families will access upon entering a FAC. In addition to providing the “first impression” of the FAC and setting the tone for visitors, it serves many important functions, supporting the overall FAC operation. These include:

- Welcome, greeting, and registration of FAC visitors.
- Individuals arriving at the FAC that are not missing a loved one do not belong at the FAC.
- Check in and check out.
- FAC rules and policies (No camera’s or taking pictures allowed at the FAC).
- Assessment of visitors immediate needs.
- Badging or wrist banding of all visitors to the FAC.
SUGGESTED STAFFING REQUIREMENTS:

1 Supervisor Lead
4-6 Greeters
10-20 Registrars (staff to effectively and efficiently register families in a timely manner)
8-12 Escorts
2-4 Law Enforcement Officers or Security Officers
2 Emergency Service Chaplains
2-4 Mental Health Workers
2 Check in/Check out for Staff
OPERATION PLAN OVERVIEW

TYPES OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER’S

1. BASIC
2. COMPLEX

Site Command
A FAC SITE FLOW SYSTEM IS A PLAN OF WHERE VICTIM FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES:

MOVE FROM ENTRANCE/REGISTRATION
THROUGH THE CENTER SERVICES
TO REUNIFICATION/NOTIFICATION EXIT
FAC-Reunification Center Sample Flow Chart

All ← Require an Escort

General Registration Entrance
Family/Relatives/Etc.
Parents/Spouses/Guardians

General Waiting Area 1
CMB's

Info Status Update

Unknown Waiting Area 2
CMB's
(Still missing or unable to locate)

Info Status Update

Victim Intake and
Registration Entrance

Unaccompanied
Children/School Children
Waiting Area A

Reunification Waiting
Area 3
CMB's
(Know where person is:
Witness, possible witness,
or other)

Coordinated
Reunification Areas

Hospital
Medical Center

Death Notification
ME/Disaster Spiritual
Care/Chaplain

Ante-mortem
Data

Discharge
Process/Released

Follow Up
WAITING/BRIEFING AREA CONSIDERATIONS

ROOM ORIENTATION: (TABLES SETUP ORGANIZATION)

ESCORTS

FAMILY CHECK IN/OUT

FAMILY (ASSIGN MHW/ESC UPON ENTRANCE TO FAMILY/TABLE)
From the initial hours after an incident and throughout the response period, families will have a high level of interest in communications and information to help them understand what has happened to their loved one. Early interest will be in identifying the location and well-being of their loved one, but will also include questions about a range of topics, such as what caused the incident, what is occurring with the recovery of human remains, and what is the process for and status of victim identification.
Victim Identification – Portable Morgue

- Hard, weather-tight, roofed structure (preferred)
- 10,000-12,000 sq ft
- Non-porous floors
- Water
- Electrical

- Loading dock
- Fuel service
- Sanitation
- Waste services (biomedical)
- Communication services
FAMILY REUNIFICATION

REUNIFICATION – DEATH Notification
HOW DO WE BRING THE FAMILY TOGETHER AGAIN
REUNIFICATION OPERATIONS

THREE TYPES OF REUNIFICATION

SIMPLE

SPECIAL

COMPLICATED

Adult Reunification
Child Reunification
  • School related event
  • Non school related event
**Reunification Operations**

In the event that the FAC will need to facilitate reunification of survivors, school students, or employees with individuals looking for their family members, how that reunification is structured and conducted will be of crucial significance.
In a **SIMPLE REUNIFICATION**, the victim survivor was safely evacuated from the critical incident site or disaster area, identified, accounted for, registered and then systematically reunited with their family and allowed to leave the FAC after the reunification and exit process.
In a **COMPLEX REUNIFICATION** one or more of the victims is unaccounted for, and/or one or more victim survivors is located, but an additional family member is currently unaccounted for, missing, or is a possible victim of the incident or disaster and has yet to be recovered and/or identified. In a complex reunification the family after being reunited with one or more family victim survivors, the family will need to be escorted to the unknown waiting area 2.
If additional family members are still in the general waiting area 1 and the family wants those family members to join them in waiting area 2 an escort should go to that area and assist those family members to waiting area 2.
In a **SPECIAL REUNIFICATION**, when the family members come to the FAC and their unaccounted or missing family member is located at a hospital or another location, those family members are informed of their family member’s status via the reunification procedure and allowed to leave the FAC via the exit procedure.
Special Considerations: School Children

- All students must be checked in and accounted for via a separate entrance of the FAC.
- Students may be triaged for physical or emotional needs by School staff or FAC team members as needed.
- The FAC site commander should be notified immediately if medical or behavioral health emergencies are identified so timely response can be requested.
- There may be a need for a separate area for school mental health support staff to speak privately with individual students or families.
• If non-local district students are brought to the FAC the FAC site commander shall be notified to coordinate with other jurisdictions via the EOC.
• Parents/guardians must sign in at the main FAC reception/registration area and present legal identification. The local school district is responsible for the proper release of students to parents/guardians according to their emergency situation SOP’s.
• Students must be signed out by their parents/guardians when they leave using a school approved student release form.
• Students who are 18 or older may sign themselves out as long as they are OK physically and emotionally and they serve as their own guardians in other situations. They must sign the release document themselves.
• Students who are under 18 who have driven themselves to school can, with documented parent/guardian verbal permission to do so, drive themselves home. They can also transport their own brothers and sisters as long as their well-being is also confirmed. All conversations must be documented on release form. Students may not transport neighbors, cousins, friends etc.

• Students are released only upon completion of standard Student Release/Runner forms. A form must be completed for each student, even if they are leaving in a family group.

• School staff must make a good faith effort to ensure that custodial parents or other adults with appropriate permission take students; we are protected by our best intent and by our written documentation of the circumstances of release of each student.

• If there is a group of students are not picked up the local County Child Protection System should be contacted by the EOC to advise the FAC staff.
VICTIM IDENTIFICATION

The function of the Victim Identification Services is to collect the antemortem information from families, to support the positive identification of the deceased. The activities involved with conducting family interviews for the purposes of gathering antemortem data are some of the most sensitive aspects of FAC operations, but they are also some of the most critical.
DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

Death notification (DN) is the process of notifying the next of kin or family members about the positive identification of their loved one.

The official (scientific) confirmation of a loved one’s death is often an important step in the family members’ grieving process and allows the family to begin to coordinate funeral and memorial services.

Because the death notification process is so sensitive it must be handled by individuals with experience in these areas, generally that means emergency service chaplains or Medical Examiner’s Office personnel.

It is not recommended that behavioral health members participate in the DN process as they may be working with these family members during the long-term recovery stage and participation in the DN can greatly hamper that effort.
DEMObILIZATION - CLOSING THE FAC

IN THE PAST IT HAS BEEN COMMON PRACTICE NOT TO CLOSE THE FAC UNTIL THE LAST VICTIM HAS BEEN RECOVERED.

IN THE 35W BRIDGE COLLAPSE, IT WAS DECIDED TO CLOSE THE FAC AFTER 10 DAYS OF OPERATION; THE FINAL VICTIM WAS RECOVERED 10 DAYS LATER.

THE DECISION TO CLOSE A FAC WILL MAY BE BASED YOUR PAST EXPERIENCES OF RESPONDING TO (DEATH SCENES AND NOTIFICATION) INCIDENTS.

THE CONCERN WAS WHO WAS GOING TO BE THE LAST ONE OR TWO FAMILIES AT THE FAC WAITING FOR THEIR RECOVERY NOTIFICATION.
Our Goal:

WALK WITH PEOPLE

Through The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death

It is not our job To get them out of the valley

That is the job of . . .

And by doing so we are setting the stage . . .

For the healing process to begin.