Texas Mass Fatality Operations Response Team

Utility of the Single-Resource Deployment
State of Death Investigation in Texas

- No State Medical Examiner: 254 Counties
- At minimum 1 Justice of the Peace per county: 13 Medical Examiners (serving 16 counties)
- Population of >1 million requiring a “Medical Examiner’s Office”:
  - ~60% of the population served by ME Offices
- Autopsy arrangements for non-ME counties
- Variation in capabilities

Legend:
- DGHS
- Has a medical examiner’s office
- Sharing a medical examiner’s office with Tarrant County
- No medical examiner’s office
Mass Fatality Incidents: 2000-2018

Total Incidents: 3,707
Total Fatalities: 23,964
Avg. Deaths per Incident: 6.5
Mass Fatality Incidents in Texas

Total Incidents: 106
Total Fatalities: 600
Avg. Deaths per Incident: 5.7
Texas Mass Fatality Operations Response Team

- Statewide mass fatality response system
  - Leverage existing resources and personnel from around the state into one cohesive response team
  - One component of EMTF

- Support local jurisdictions with:
  - Search and recovery
  - Morgue operations
  - Victim information
  - Victim identification
  - Establishment of a Family Assistance Center

- In coordination with Texas Funeral Directors Association (TFDA) Strike Team
  - Mortuary assistance
  - Storage and transportation
  - Family interviews
Typed documents for 4 teams:
- Incident Site
- Morgue Operations
- Victim Information
- Victim Identification

Single resource also available

All teams deploy with a Support Services Team
- Command
- Logistics
- Planning
- Finance

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type II</td>
<td>Type III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Type II</td>
<td>Type IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simple Incident Variables

- Estimated 100 fatalities
- Estimated 50 fatalities
- Estimated 25 fatalities
- Estimated 10 fatalities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource:</th>
<th>Texas Mass Fatality Operations Response Team (TMORT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimum Capabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Public Health &amp; Medical (ESF 8)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component</strong></td>
<td><strong>Metric</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Function</strong></td>
<td>Primary Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capability</strong></td>
<td>12 hour operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobilization</strong></td>
<td>&lt; 6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operationally Capable</strong></td>
<td>6 hours upon arrival at the site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity</strong></td>
<td>Number of Crew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 – person response (7) Support Specialists (3) Forensic Anthropologist (2) Forensic Pathologist (2) Autopsy Assistant (2) HR Storage Specialist (10) Tracking Specialist (2) Admitting Specialist (2) Radiographer (1) Personal Effects Specialist (2) Photographer (1) Fingerprint Specialist (1) Forensic Odontologist (1) Dental Assistant (2) DNA Specialist (2) Exit Review Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personnel Standard</strong></td>
<td>ICS 100, 200, 700, 800 Attended TMORT Course Meet Position Specific Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equipment</strong></td>
<td>Command Vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tow Vehicle</strong></td>
<td>Class 8 Truck</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
TMORT’s Niche

Limited local capabilities

Best Practices
Disaster Portable Morgue Unit
Type IV: Single-Resource Request
Best practices are not being applied:

- Because locals are unaware or unable, or
- Because they’re not needed in all cases

Risk: Perception

- Big jurisdiction that takes a “long time” to process an incident because of legitimate incident characteristics (commingling, fragmentation)
- Small jurisdiction handles large incident quickly with apparent success
NC agency: State liable for medical examiner’s body swap error

By Fred Claren Kelly · fclark@charlestonpost.com

Coroner: Misidentification Began With Students' ID Cards

Identities Of Crash Survivor, Dead Woman Mixed For Weeks

POSTED: 11:56 AM, Jan 5, 2006

Lawsuit: Wrong family got body because of misidentification

By Travis Fain
travis.fain@news-record.com Apr 30, 2013 · (0)

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 Officer, Samantha Kennedy

Ohio Coroner Denied Summary Judgment In Misidentification Lawsuit, Wright & Schulte LLC Reports

Posted on March 23, 2014 by Editor · Wright & Schulte LLC

Morgue Mix-Up Leads Mom To Believe Daughter Is Dead

CRIME 03/20/2014 06:19 pm ET | Updated Mar 21, 2014

Case of mistaken identity stuns families

Updated 8/1/2009 3:00 PM ET

May 29th, 2011

12:39 AM ET

Macabre body ID process adds to Joplin's pain

Ind. coroner regrets case of mistaken ID

Update: 8/29/2009 8:48 PM ET

Mistaken identity case puts spotlight on coroners

BY STEVE LEVIN California staff writer steven@bakersfield.com Aug 4, 2014 · (0)
TMORT’s Niche

Limited local capabilities

Best Practices

Type IV Resource
What are the critical components of TMORT success?

- **TMORT must be scalable and flexible**
  - Every medicolegal authority in Texas has different capabilities/needs
  - Every incident is different and requires a specific response
  - Services range from informed SME advice to Type 1 response
    - Small (Type IV) deployment often all that is needed

- **Management of expectations and informed medicolegal media presence is critical**
  - Public
  - Elected officials

- **Early medicolegal scene/incident assessment**
  - To preserve context
  - To make informed decisions about operations
  - Rapid deployment of specific functions
Houston school bus crash leaves 2 dead, several hurt
Witnesses say the bus nose-dived and then fell onto its side along freeway embankment
San Marcos, TX. July, 2018: **Type IV Deployment**

Fifth body recovered from San Marcos apartment fire, authorities say

* Bodies have not been identified; 5 residents remain unaccounted for*
For more information about TMORT, visit: txemtf.org/tmort