

MASS FATALITY OPERATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN

Section 1: Introduction

2021



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Acronyms

Acronym	Name
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DMAT	Disaster Medical Assistance Team
DMORT	Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ERT	Emergency Response Team
ESF	Emergency Support Function
FAC	Family Assistance Center
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Hazmat	Hazardous Material
HIPAA	Health Information Portability and Accountability Act
ICS	Incident Command Structure
IR	Information Resource
IT	Information Technology
JFO	Joint Field Office



Acronym	Name
LDH	Louisiana Department of Health
MF FAC	Mass Fatality Family Assistance Center
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRN	Morgue Reference Number
NGO	Non-Governmental Agency
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NOK	Next of Kin
NRF	National Response Framework
NRP	National Response Plan
NTSB	National Transportation Safety Board
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PIO	Public Information Officer
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RM	Reported Missing
SEMS	State Standardized Emergency Management System
VIP	Victim Identification Program



Acronym	Name
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

1 Forward and Promulgations

1.1 Forward

Investigation, recovery, and management of the dead after a natural or manmade catastrophe are one of the most difficult aspects of disaster response and recovery operations. It is the primary responsibility of the local office responsible for determining cause and manner of death to be responsible for these tasks. Despite the grim nature of fatality management, it is imperative that the timely, safe, and respectful disposition of deceased victims be an essential component of an effective disaster preparedness, response, and recovery program. This document serves as the Mass Fatality Response Plan for The State of Louisiana Emergency Support Function 8 Department of Health and Hospitals (ESF-8 LDH) and provides an important tool in strengthening catastrophic mass fatality preparedness activities.

This plan establishes the overall roles and responsibilities of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH and describes the necessary collaboration with other response agencies involved in a mass fatality response. This plan is meant to be used in conjunction with the *National Incident Management System (NIMS)* along with all established standard operating procedures and protocols.

Questions and comments regarding this plan should be addressed to:

Louisiana Department of Health
628 N. 4th Street
Baton Rouge, LA. 70821



1.2 Promulgation

The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Mass Fatality Response Plan is consistent with the duties of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH provided during a state of emergency. The Governor has complete authority over all agencies of government and the right to exercise all police power within the area or designated region. During a state of emergency, mutual aid is mandatory.

If the local Coroner is unwilling/unable to perform their duties, the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH may be tasked with the responsibility to manage mass fatalities that occur within the jurisdiction. While the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH will be responsible for managing the mass fatality response, other state and federal agencies may provide support when requests for assistance are transmitted through proper channels to the state. Incidents resulting in fatalities that exceed the available resources of the local jurisdiction where the incident occurs will be considered a mass fatality and may initiate the activation of this plan if the local Coroner is unwilling/unable to perform their duties.

The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Mass Fatality Response Plan is hereby promulgated, on this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Authorized Signature

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals



1.3 Modifications and Updates

The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH is responsible for the maintenance of this State-wide Mass Fatality Response Plan. The Plan will be reviewed and revised as required to incorporate federal, state, regional or local guidelines or directives and to address operational issues identified during exercises and incidents.

All Plan modifications and updates will be coordinated and approved by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Office. Proposed changes may be directed to the

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals
628 N. 4th Street
Baton Rouge, LA. 70821

1.4 Plan Distribution

The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Mass Fatality Response Plan, will maintain the plan in their office. Requests for copies must be coordinated through DHH.

1.5 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for an organized and effective response to a mass fatality event that causes loss of life exceeding the resource capability or capacity of the local Coroner and also the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Office. The plan provides a structure for coordination and communication among multiple agencies and organizations to provide mass fatality management within the boundaries of the State of Louisiana.

More specifically, this plan:

- Recognizes the potential for mass fatality incidents and a need to efficiently respond to an event that results in a catastrophic loss of life.



- Provides concept of operations and roles and responsibilities for managing mass fatality incidents in the State of Louisiana for the ESF-8 LDH.
- Recognizes the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH as the legal authority for mass fatality operations if the Coroner is unable to perform his/her duties.
- Establishes an organized structure for coordinated and scalable response to mass fatality incidents.
- Identifies some state, federal, private, and volunteer resources that may be utilized in responding to a mass fatality incident.
- Is NIMS compliant and focuses on the personnel and activities that take place under the four Operational Branches (body recovery, morgue operations, family assistance center and identifications) that fall under the Operations Section Chief of the NIMS organizational response framework.
- Provides planning guidance for preparation and response to a mass fatality incident.
- Serves as a foundation for further development and refinement of the State of Louisiana's preparedness and response to events resulting in mass fatalities.
- Recognizes the primary operations in a mass fatality incident response:
 - Recovery Operations
 - Morgue Operation
 - Family Assistance Center Operations
 - Identification of Human Remains

1.6 Planning Assumptions

- The purpose of mass fatality response is to recover and identify the dead and to ensure a timely, safe, and respectful disposition of the human remains
- A catastrophic mass fatality incident will cause critical human remains care management issues and activities, thus overburdening the capability and capacity of local government.
- All disasters are local events. The State Of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH may be tasked with managing a mass fatality response that occur within the State of Louisiana if the local Coroners is unwilling or unable to perform their duties.
- When necessary, the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH may request assistance from state and federal agencies in accordance with any relevant emergency management system. The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH or designee will be the incident commander for all mass fatality events within the boundaries of the State of Louisiana.
- Through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) process, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness will coordinate out-of-state



resources. Federal agencies and resources responding under the auspices of the National Response Framework (NRF), Catastrophic Incident Annex, will integrate into the state and local State Emergency Management System (SEMS) organizational structure.

- A mass fatality incident may severely affect infrastructure. Major utilities, essential services, and supplies, including fuel, could be non-existent.
- A mass fatality plan does not address the needs of injured survivors.
- Partnerships with other agencies, departments, and organizations involved in emergency response are essential. An effective plan involves key local stakeholders and will improve local capability, thus facilitating a rapid response with better integration of resources from all levels of government.

1.7 Integration with the National Response Plan

This Plan has been developed in accordance with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's *National Response Plan* (NRP). The NRP is an all-discipline, all-hazards plan intended to establish a single comprehensive framework for managing domestic incidents. Additionally, the NRP is scalable to accommodate an event of any magnitude and ensures that primary incident management occurs at the lowest geographic, organizational, and jurisdictional level. The NRP establishes a *National Response Framework* (NRF); the NRF incorporates best practices and procedures from incident management disciplines (homeland security, emergency management, law enforcement, fire, public health, emergency medical, and the private sector) and integrates them into a unified structure. The NRF establishes how federal, state, and local agencies should coordinate with one another and provides common protocols to ensure various agencies work together toward a common goal. Should a mass fatality event occur, compatibility with the NRP and the NRF ensures that the capabilities of all levels of government and stakeholders are ready and able to deploy and operate as a cohesive team.

1.8 Background

1.8.1 Mass Fatality

A mass fatality for purposes of this plan is an incident where more deaths occur than can be handled by the local coroner and the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH. A mass fatality incident may



be caused by natural hazards (earthquakes, floods and hurricanes), accidental disaster (airline accidents, bridge or tunnel collapses), or acts of terror. The type and magnitude of the disaster may significantly alter the pre-disaster availability of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH resources. Mass fatality planning should be based on a scalable hierarchy of response that can be tailored to any specific situation.

A mass fatality becomes a catastrophic mass fatality when the loss of life overwhelms the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH and available resources. A catastrophic mass fatality also requires extraordinary support from state, federal, and/or private resources.

The goal of a mass fatality response is to recover, identify, and when possible, return the remains of the deceased in a timely, safe, and respectful manner, taking reasonable care to accommodate religious, cultural and societal expectations according to RS 13:5715 2-pauper burial and RS 9:1551 unclaimed bodies.

1.8.2 Role of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH

When an event within the jurisdiction of the State of Louisiana becomes a mass fatality and the local Coroner is unwilling/unable to perform their duties, the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH may provide leadership, direction, and guidance for the mass fatality response within the jurisdiction. The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH is responsible for overseeing recovery and morgue operations, collecting ante-mortem data about the missing, identifying victims, determining the cause and manner of death, certifying deaths and notifying the next of kin. The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH may also be responsible for managing the death investigation, although there may be some exception when the mass fatality is the result of criminal actions. If the mass fatality is a result of criminal actions, and the investigative lead is other than the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH, the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH will closely coordinate with that lead agency. The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH also serves as the Public Information Officer regarding all fatalities operations and will interact with the news media.



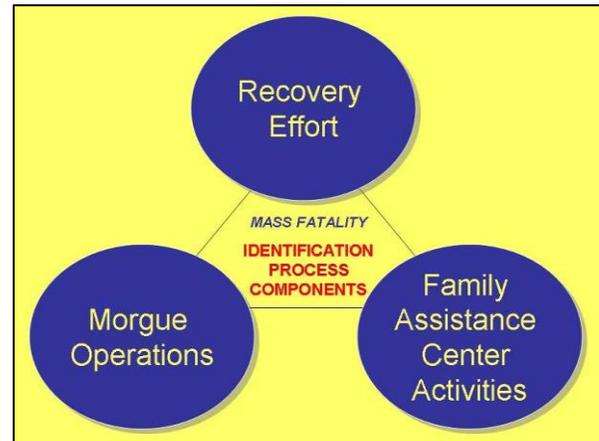
The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH is also responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate and current contact lists that include primary and secondary contact numbers for all mass fatality stakeholders. Contact lists should be reviewed and updated at least quarterly. See [Attachment A](#) for an example contact list.

In the event of a mass fatality the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH may assume responsibility or cooperate with the lead investigative agency to manage the death investigation, which may include the following tasks:

- Determine the need for additional assistance and request as necessary
- Coordinate search and recovery operations
- Establish morgue operations
- Establish temporary storage of remains
- Establish and maintain documentation and numbering system
- Establish and coordinate with family assistance center operations for ante-mortem data collection
- In commercial aviation incidents, coordinate with National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to organize site visits for family members
- Provide briefings for victims' families, the media, and mass fatality task force members
- Provide information to the public regarding response activities
- Identify the deceased
- Issue death certificates
- Notify the legal next of kin of identifications directly or by designee
- Release identified remains to family
- Bury unknown and or unclaimed bodies pursuant to RS 13:5715 2-pauper burial and RS 9:1551 unclaimed bodies.

1.8.3 Mass Fatality Response Operational Components

A successful mass fatality response must integrate operational components critical to the identification process: Body Recovery, Morgue, Family Assistance Center operations, and the identification of human remains.



The first step in the identification process is the recovery of deceased bodies from the incident site and the transportation of these bodies to the

morgue or other place of victim identification services. It is imperative that individuals specifically trained in body recovery are involved in this process. These individuals must gather and record data at the scene, carefully and thoroughly document the position and outward condition of the remains, and ensure the data accompanies the recovered remains to the morgue. Critical data collected during the recovery process typically includes:

- Precise location of the remains
- Condition of the remains
- Clothing and other personal effects related to the remains
- Tentative identification information

When the location and condition of the remains have been properly documented, each set of remains, or fragments of remains, should be considered and treated as separate recoveries, placed in their own body bag, and given a unique recovery or field recovery number. After the body or body fragments have been recovered, the body or fragments are transported along with recovery documentation either directly to the morgue or to a transfer site to await transfer to the morgue.

The second component of the identification process is the morgue operations. Morgue staff members perform an examination of the body and carefully and cautiously record post-mortem information into a main database designated for storing and retrieving this type of information.



A morgue operation typically includes the following functional units: Admitting, Intake, Personal effects, Photography, Radiology, Fingerprint, Dental, Pathology, Anthropology, and DNA. Each unit examines the recovered bodies, fragmented remains and associated personal effects, and gathers applicable post-mortem information. When the examination is complete, the body will be stored in an appropriate storage unit until it is identified and returned to the family. If the body remains unidentified or is identified but unclaimed, the body will be buried, cremated, or disposed of in a manner determined by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH.

The third component of the identification process is the Family Assistance Center (FAC) operation, which is usually established away from the disaster site so that sights, sounds, and smells from the disaster cannot be detected. The FAC provides an opportunity for information exchange between the authorities and the families and friends of the deceased in a safe, secure environment. The FAC also provides limited critical services to the public. The following activities take place at the FAC:

- Collection of ante-mortem data during interviews with family members.
- Dissemination of information to the public and specifically to the families of the deceased.
- Notification of death to the families.
- Assistance in releasing the bodies to family members.
- Assistance with the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the affected families and community in dealing with the mass fatality.

FAC staff typically collects the following ante-mortem data:

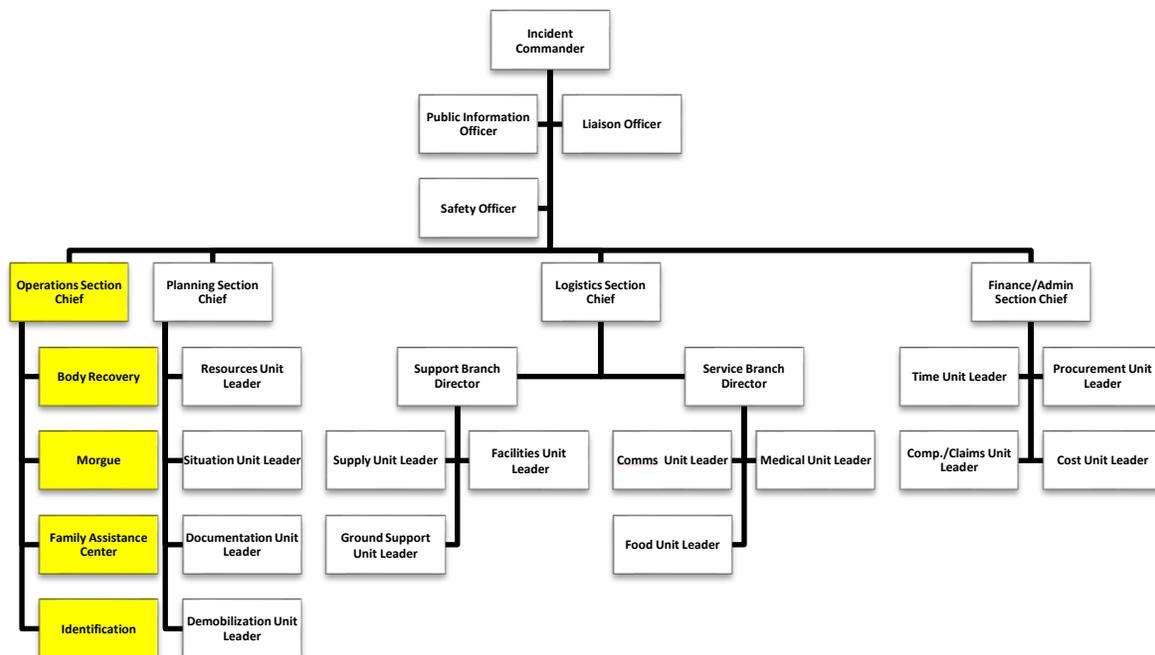
Commonly Collected Ante Mortem Information*			
Demographic Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Date of birth • Age • Sex 	Physical Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height • Weight • Hair color • Eye color • Markings (e.g., scars, birthmarks, surgical incisions) 	Medical History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past surgeries • Medical device implants • Dental x-rays • Medical x-rays 	Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing deceased may have worn • Jewelry the deceased may have been wearing • DNA reference samples from family members <u>if needed</u> for positive identification

Table 1: Ante Mortem Information

For positive identifications, ante-mortem information gathered at FAC is compared to post-mortem data gathered at the morgue. Identifications shall be based on sound scientific/forensic evidence. The Chief Pathologist or his or her designee must agree with the comparison findings for a positive identification to be reported.

1.8.4 Mass Fatality Response Organizational Chart

Proper management and communication is essential to a successful mass fatality response. The identification of human remains requires the comparison of information from body recovery, morgue operations, and the Family Assistance Center. Therefore, efficient communications between these operational components is critical. An organizational chart is an important tool for the successful communication of the management hierarchy to all individuals involved the mass fatality response. When questions arise, the proper managers should be easily identified and consulted. Below is a NIMS organizational framework that should be used and modified to meet the needs management needs of the mass fatality response.



[Attachment B](#) can be modified as needed to document the names and contact information of the individuals involved in the mass fatality response.



An Incident Command Structure (ICS) is modular building from the top down and allowing for expansion or contraction as needed. The five basic functional areas are Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance/Administration. This plan is not designed to teach NIMS or ICS however is NIMS compliant. This Plan will address the operational components of the mass fatality response:

- Body Recovery
- Morgue Operations
- Family Assistance Center
- Identification Center

1.8.4.1 Command Staff:

Public Information Officer (PIO): Responsible for interfacing with the public, media and other agencies with information related to the mass fatality response effort and as necessary, will prepare the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH to address the public and or media. The PIO will also monitor media reports and assist in rumor control.

Safety Officer: The Safety Officer will monitor all aspects of the mass fatality response and relate any concerns to the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH relating to operational safety including the health and safety of all mass fatality personnel. Additionally the Safety Officer will assist Safety Officers in each functional area and or those affiliated with individual agencies and organizations involved in the response providing support as needed. An Incident Safety Plan will be developed by the Safety Officer to insure ongoing assessment of hazardous environments, coordination of multiagency safety efforts and implementation of measure to promote mass fatality response personnel safety and general safety of response operations.

Liaison Officer: Serves as the point of contact for representatives of other agencies and organizations providing input on their agencies or organizations policies, resource availability and other mass fatality response related matters.

1.8.4.2 Planning Section

The Planning Section is responsible for collecting, evaluating and disseminating operational information pertaining to the mass fatality response. This section maintains information and



intelligence on the current and forecasted situation, the status of resources assigned to the response, and prepares and documents IAP's and maps.

Planning Section Chief: The Planning Section Chief oversees all activities related to the Planning Section and Unit Leaders. This includes all incident related data gathering and analysis regarding the mass fatality response and resources conducts Planning Meetings and prepares the IAP for each operational period.

Resources Unit: Ensures that all assigned personnel and resources have checked in at the response and maintains a system for keeping track of current location, status, and master list of all resources.

Situation Unit: Collects processes and organizes ongoing situation information, prepares situation summaries and develops projections and forecasts of future events related to the response. Additionally gathers information and intelligence utilized in the development of the IAP and provide situational reports to the Planning Chief or Incident Commander.

Documentation Unit: Maintains complete and accurate files pertaining to the response, for legal, analytical and historical purposes including all IAP's.

Demobilization Unit: Develops an Incident Demobilization Plan with specific instructions for all response personnel and resources that require demobilization. Early in the response this unit will begin compiling rosters of personnel and resources to aid in the plan construction. Resources that do not require specific demobilization instructions, such as some State of Louisiana provided resources, will not be included in the demobilization plan. Upon approval of the plan by the Incident Commander, this unit will distribute it as necessary.

1.8.4.3 Logistics Section

The Logistics Section provides for all support needs for the response such as ordering resources and providing facilities, transportation, supplies, equipment, maintenance and fuel, food service, communications and medical services for response personnel.



Logistics Section Chief: The Logistics section Chief is responsible for all Logistics Section activities, may have one or more deputies as needed. Additionally, to maintain proper span and control, two branches may be established, the Support and Services branches.

1.8.4.3.1 Support Branch:

The Support Branch includes the Supply, Facilities and Ground Support units

Supply Unit: Orders, receives, processes, stores, inventories and distributes all response related resources and supplies including all tactical and support resources (including personnel) and all expendable and nonexpendable supplies required.

Facilities Unit: Sets up, maintains and demobilizes all facilities used in support of the mass fatality response operations. The agencies or organizations providing security for all facilities will coordinate with this unit.

Ground Support Unit: Maintains and repairs tactical vehicles, records usage time for equipment, supplies fuel, provides transportation of resources and develops and implements Traffic Plan. In a larger response effort, will maintain a motor pool for use by response personnel.

1.8.4.3.2 Service Branch

The Service Branch includes the Communications, Medical and Food units.

Communications Unit: Develops Communications Plan to maximize the usage of communication equipment assigned to the response. Additionally will install and test all communications equipment, operates the incident communications center, distributes and recovers communications equipment and maintains and repairs communications equipment.

Medical Unit: Responsible for provision of medical services to response personnel by:

- Developing procedures to handle minor and major medical incidents
- Develops Incident Medical Plan
- Provides continuity of medical care to all response personnel
- Provides transportation for injured personnel
- Coordinates rest and rehabilitation of response personnel
- Tracks injured personnel from site of injury to medical treatment location
- Processing all paperwork related to injuries or deaths



- Coordinate personnel and mortuary affairs for response personnel fatalities

The Medical Unit Leader will develop a Medical Plan, which will be included in the IAP and will provide specific information on medical assistance capabilities at response locations, potential hazardous conditions and off-site medical assistance facilities and procedures for handling complex medical emergencies.

Food Unit: Determines the food and hydration requirements of response personnel, orders and provides food, cooking facilities when needed and ensures food safety. The Food Unit must work closely with the Planning Section, Facilities Unit, Supply Unit, and Ground Support Unit in providing services.

1.8.4.3.3 Finance/Administration Section

The Finance/Administration section will be established when there is a need for financial and or administrative services to support incident management activities in the State of Louisiana during a mass fatality response especially when the incident is large and involves significant funding from multiple sources.

Finance/Administration Section Chief: The Finance/Administration Section Chief is responsible for all activities related to the Finance/Administration Section. He or she will monitor expenditures to ensure all applicable statutory rules are met, will determine the need for establishing subordinate units (based on need) and will work closely with Planning and Logistics units.

Time Unit: Responsible for ensuring daily recording of personnel time and working with the Logistics Section records equipment use time. With multiple agencies and organizations participation in a mass fatality response, this unit will work with representative from the various participating entities to capture personnel hours.

Procurement Unit: Administers all financial matters pertaining to vendor contracts by coordinating with State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH officials to identify sources for equipment, prepares and signs equipment rental agreements and processes all administrative requirements



associate with equipment rental and supply contracts. It will work closely with the Logistics Section in the performance of their duties.

Compensation and Claims Unit: Handles injury compensation, ensures that all forms required by workers compensation programs are completed, maintains files on injuries and illnesses and ensures that all witness statements are obtained in writing. This unit will work closely with the Medical Unit in completing all associated forms and other paperwork.

Cost Unit: Provides cost analysis data, ensures that equipment and personnel for which payment is required are properly identified, obtains and records all costs data and analyzes and prepares estimates of all response costs.

1.8.4.4 Operations Section

The Operations Section is responsible for managing operations directed toward the recovery, identification and reunification of the dead with their surviving family. This plan is largely designed to speak to the Operations aspect of the mass fatality response effort.

Operations Section Chief: Directly manages all mass fatality response tactical activities and implements the Incident Action Plan (IAP) and may have one or more deputies as required. There will be an Operations Section Chief for each operational period that will aid the Planning Section in the development of an IAP for the next operational period of responsibility.

Branches: The four branches under the Operations Chief are the Recovery Operations Branch, Morgue Operations Branch, Family Assistance Center Operations Branch and Identification Branch. Specific responsibilities for each of these branches and their subordinates are spelled out in detail in the following section of the Mass Fatality Response Plan.

1.8.5 Special Considerations in Mass Fatality Responses

The cause of the mass fatality and the specifics of the effected population, can present special challenges. Anticipating, understanding, and appropriately responding to these challenges are imperative.



1.8.5.1 Political Inquiries and Requests

Often there will be political requests to expedite the processing of certain human remains, collection of ante-mortem information at the Family Assistance Center and/or collection and processing of DNA samples. Expediting certain tasks causes an overall reduction in operating efficiency and often results in mistakes. In these situations, staff facing pressure to complete tasks quickly may not follow established policy and procedures. To that end, the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH should implement a policy on how “special” requests will be received, reviewed, and potentially honored.

1.8.5.2 Foreign Nationals

If foreign nationals are among the missing, their government, police agencies, medical legal institutes or forensic laboratories may contact the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH and act as a liaison for the foreign nationals’ families in providing the appropriate ante-mortem information. While this can be an effective means of communicating information, no decisions on DNA sample collection or testing should be made without first consulting with the person in charge of the DNA identification effort for the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH. The appropriate testing systems and parameters must be defined by the agency in charge of the identification effort.

1.8.5.3 Undocumented Aliens and Criminals

Family members who live in the United States illegally or family members who are wanted by law enforcement may not come forth to provide ante-mortem information and/or DNA samples. Without this critical information, the identification of human remains may prove impossible. Attempting to identify bodies without proper reference information is time-consuming and costly. The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH should implement a policy on how the data provided by such families will be used. This policy may be shared with the public to encourage assistance and participation without fear of ramifications.



Sample Forms and Documents

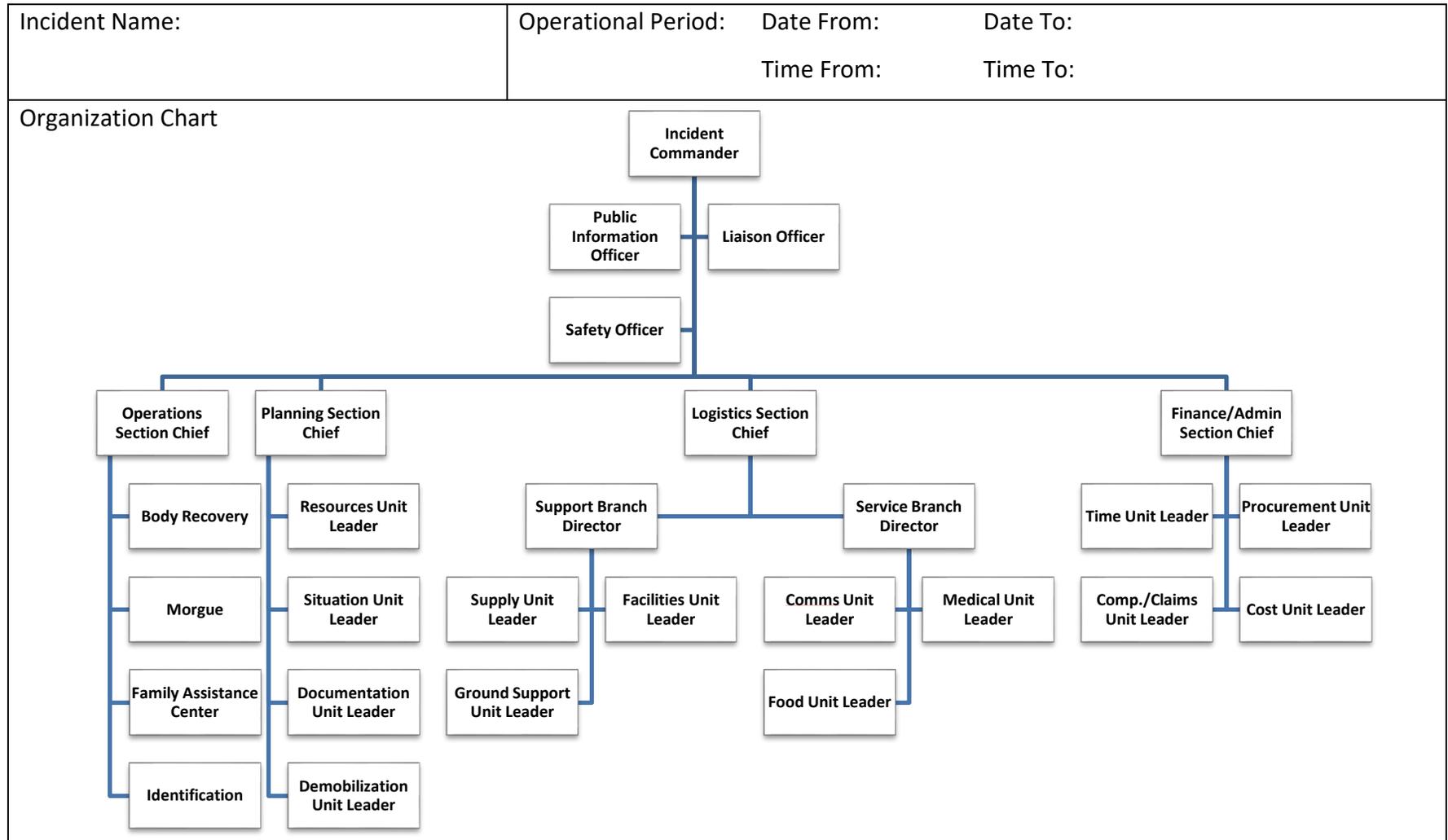
- Attachment A: Mass Fatality Emergency Contact List
- Attachment B: Mass Fatality Response Organizational Chart



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Introduction and Background: Attachment B

MASS FATALITY RESPONSE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Prepared by: Name: _____ Position/Title: _____ Signature: _____ Date/Time: _____