



# MASS FATALITY OPERATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN

## **Section 6: Hospital and Healthcare Roles & Responsibilities**

2021



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<b>6</b>	<b>Hospital and Healthcare Roles and Responsibilities .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Fatality Coordination with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Mass Fatality Plan Activation and Coordination .....</b>	<b>4</b>
6.2.1	Communication with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH.....	4
6.2.2	Handling and Storage of Human Remains: .....	4
6.2.3	Identification of a Body Holding Area: .....	5
6.2.4	Preparing the Human Remains: .....	5
6.2.5	Transportation of the Human remains to the Body Holding Area: .....	6
6.2.6	Identification of Human Remains .....	6
6.2.7	Daily Reporting .....	6
6.2.8	Interaction with Family Members.....	7
6.2.9	Tracking of Human Remains .....	7
6.2.10	Personal Property .....	7
6.2.11	Human Remains Release Procedures .....	8
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Mental Health/Psychosocial Support for Staff .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Release of Public Information .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Equipment and Supplies.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6.6</b>	<b>Universal Precautions .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6.7</b>	<b>Education and Training.....</b>	<b>10</b>



## 6 Hospital and Healthcare Roles and Responsibilities

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance to the State of Louisiana hospitals, clinics, and healthcare facilities following a mass fatality. This section outlines for the hospital/healthcare facility, their roles and responsibilities whenever a mass fatality Incident happens that results in human remains at the hospital/healthcare facility in the State of Louisiana, regardless of the nature of the incident or the size and capability of the entity. This section describes the role of the hospital/healthcare facilities in supporting the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH following a mass fatality and provides for the implementation, activation and response needed to preserve health and dignity while providing support to the citizens of the State of Louisiana.

When patients expire in hospitals/healthcare facilities, some are considered “Coroner’s cases” or cases that must be reported to the Coroner or if he is unavailable to perform his/her duties to the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH for the purposes of investigation and/or statistical reporting. As outlined in Section 2.2, the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH will be the lead in a mass fatality response if the local jurisdiction is unable to take the lead role.

### 6.1 Fatality Coordination with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH

When a mass fatality occurs and there are human remains in the hospital/healthcare facility, the hospital/healthcare facility will call the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH to obtain specific instructions on how to manage, store, track, and release the human remains. Typically following a mass fatality, it can be difficult to determine what deaths occurred as a result of the fatality event. Therefore until the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH develops incident specific guidelines all hospital/healthcare facility related deaths will be initially considered as “Coroner’s cases” and will be reported to the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH. Following a mass fatality, it is the responsibility of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH to provide guidance to the hospital/healthcare facility as to which cases need to be taken to the mass fatality morgue.



## 6.2 Mass Fatality Plan Activation and Coordination

The highest managing authority on duty at the hospital/healthcare facility has the responsibility to activate the hospital/healthcare facility portion of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Mass Fatality Plan. This Section of the [State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Mass Fatality Response Plan can be activated when the hospital/healthcare facility has deaths related to the mass fatality incident as outlined in Section 1.2.

Once the plan is activated, the highest managing authority on duty at the hospital/healthcare facility has the responsibility to appoint a Fatality Coordinator. The Fatality Coordinator will be the primary point of contact with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH and will work with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH to accomplish the following tasks as outlined below. The Facility Coordinator shall be responsible for managing the human remains in the hospital/healthcare facility and reporting to the hospital/healthcare facility Command Center. Additional support for the Fatality Coordinator will be appointed as needed.

### 6.2.1 *Communication with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH*

The Fatality Coordinator will communicate with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH or the appointed designee by phone, email or in person as needed to provide status reports on the number and condition of the bodies, and to receive instructions on numbering, disposition of remains and the collection of personal items, medical records and medical specimens.

### 6.2.2 *Handling and Storage of Human Remains:*

Although the proper, respectful and careful handling and storage of human remains is critical in hospital environments on a daily basis; in the aftermath of a mass fatality incident it will not only be critical but much more difficult. The hospital/healthcare facility will have to address not only the “normal” daily cases involving deceased individuals but those who die due to injuries sustained in the incident. This will place greater demands on the hospital/healthcare facility remains handling and storage capabilities.



### 6.2.3 *Identification of a Body Holding Area:*

The Fatality Coordinator will work with the hospital/healthcare facility staff to identify an appropriate body holding area in the hospital/healthcare facility. The body holding area shall be secure and spacious enough to handle the number of bodies associated with the mass fatality. The hospital/healthcare facility will not act as a long-term storage facility for the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH. Rather, the hospital/healthcare facility will only act as a temporary storage facility until the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH transports the bodies to the mass fatality morgue facility. The Fatality Coordinator will notify the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH of the holding capacity of the hospital and will make arrangements for the bodies to be transported to the morgue as appropriate for identification and repatriation.

### 6.2.4 *Preparing the Human Remains:*

Following a mass fatality, human remains from outside the hospital/healthcare facility will be taken to the mass fatality morgue for identification and repatriation. Human remains from deaths that occurred in the hospital/healthcare facility will be handled in a compassionate, dignified and respectful manner. The following will occur following a death:

- The Primary Physician will be notified.
- The Physician or designee will pronounce the patient dead.
- The exact time and the patient ceases to breathe will be documented in the physician progress notes
- Without removing or any items from the body (such as tubes and intravenous equipment, clothing or hospital identification band), place the body in the post mortem bag. **NOTE:** *I.V. lines may be cut or removed from the bottle and tied to prevent leaking of fluid. Do not clean the body or any item attached to the body.*
- Place any patient items that were in the patient's room into a separate plastic bag seal the bag closed and place the plastic bag in the body bag unless otherwise directed by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH.
- Label the body bag with as you normally would with toe tags, body bag labels or other suitable materials.
- Inform Security to transport the body to the body holding area.
- Verify the identity of the patient prior to the patient leaving the Unit.



- Call the laboratory and collect any blood or specimens that may still be available and package those in a separate plastic bag. Seal the bag closed and place the plastic bag in the body bag unless otherwise directed by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH
- Make a copy of the pertinent hospital records as requested by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH and place the records in a sealed plastic bag and place in the body bag unless otherwise directed by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH

### *6.2.5 Transportation of the Human remains to the Body Holding Area:*

The Fatality Coordinator will arrange for the secure transport of the human remains in the body bag and the associated paperwork to the body holding area in the hospital/healthcare facility. The hospital/healthcare facility will only hold the number of bodies that they have the capacity to temporarily store in the body holding area. Additional bodies will be immediately taken to the mass fatality morgue for identification and repatriation.

### *6.2.6 Identification of Human Remains*

Since the identification of the human remains following a mass fatality must be coordinated in order to be effective, all collection of post-mortem identification information (DNA, fingerprints, dental exams) will be conducted by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH. Additionally, unless otherwise specified by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH all ante-mortem data collection from family and friends of the victim will take place at the Family Assistance Center according to Section 4: Family Assistance Center.

### *6.2.7 Daily Reporting*

Since each mass fatality is unique, the Fatality Coordinator will contact and work with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH to identify how, when, and where information and reporting of deaths will occur. It is anticipated that on a daily basis, the Fatality Coordinator will report the following information to the Coroner as appropriate:

- Number and names of deaths
- Number and names of human remains on hand (body census)
- Number and identification of remains released to surviving family members
- Number of available



### *6.2.8 Interaction with Family Members*

The extent of family interaction will depend on the disposition of the bodies. If the human remains are taken to the mass fatality morgue, the hospital/healthcare facility will provide the family with the location, contact information and hours of operation of the Family Assistance Center established by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH. The Family Assistance Center will provide the families with general information about the identification process, death notification process and the process of releasing the bodies from the mass fatality morgue. If the bodies will be released directly to the families (funeral home release), then the hospital will follow their normal procedures for interacting with families following a death.

### *6.2.9 Tracking of Human Remains*

The State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH will instruct the Fatality Coordinator on the proper mechanism for tracking the human remains while in the hospital/healthcare facility. If the number of deaths is significant the Coroner may assign a series of “Hospital Human Remains” or HHR numbers that can be used to track the remains within the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH’s Victim Identification Program. An HHR number should only be used for each contiguous human remains. For example, if the hospital/healthcare facility has fragmented remains, each fragment would be given its own HHR number.

A Mass Fatality Body Holding Area Log (See [Attachment A](#)) will be maintained documenting the temporary storage of the mass fatality human remains in the human remains hospital/healthcare facility.

Each hospital/healthcare facility will be responsible for coordinating with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH and planning decedent storage, appropriate documentation and transportation in the event of a mass fatality that may occur at their facility.

### *6.2.10 Personal Property*

As outlined above in the instructions for preparing human remains, place any patient items that were in the patient’s room into a separate plastic bag. Seal the bag closed, and place the plastic



bag in the body bag, unless otherwise directed by the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Document. Seal all items to maintain integrity and chain-of-custody of the decedent's personal property if identified as potential evidence.

### **6.2.11 Human Remains Release Procedures**

The Fatality Coordinator will work with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH to implement appropriate and standardized human remains release procedures. The details of the procedures will be dependent of the mass fatality. Before the body is released, the Fatality Coordinator of his/her designee will:

- Verify the identity of the decedent
- Obtain a signature to document the transfer of custody of the body either on the “Mass Fatality Body Transfer Form” (See [Attachment B](#)) or other form as appropriate for the mass fatality
- Complete the Mass Fatality Body Holding Area Log (See [Attachment A](#))
- Verify that the proper release procedures have been followed:
  - Remains will be transported from the hospital to the mass fatality morgue for post-mortem examination due to the nature of the event.
  - Under certain circumstances bodies may be released directly to the family's mortuary official. For example, if the patients they were admitted to the hospital with the proper identification information and the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH gives approval for the direct recess.

Each hospital/healthcare facility will coordinate with the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH if and when “next of kin” notification or Death Certificates responsibilities will fall to that particular facility.

## **6.3 Mental Health/Psychosocial Support for Staff**

Psychosocial/Spiritual support for hospital/healthcare facility staff will be important because of the increased demand placed on the staff due to the mass fatality incident. Hospital/healthcare facility administration can identify their own resources for mental/behavioral health, community and faith-based professionals to provide counseling to personnel during the mass fatality incident. Alternatively, the hospital may want to use the psychosocial/spiritual support services that are outlined in Section 4.5.





## 6.4 Release of Public Information

The hospital/healthcare facility Public Information Officer will coordinate all public information releases regarding the mass fatality in coordination with the Public Information Officer for the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH.

## 6.5 Equipment and Supplies

The following supplies may be needed in the event of a mass fatality:

- Personal Protective Equipment
  - Tyvek Coveralls-size S, M, L, XXL
  - Disposable surgeon caps and/or bouffant caps
  - Gloves-Microflex Nitrile and/or Latex Gloves S, M, L, XL
  - Heavy rubber gloves
  - Disposable ear loop surgeons masks
  - Disposable ear loop surgeons face mask with built-in face shield
  - Full face shield w/ foam forehead cushion
  - N95 Respirator Masks
  - Shoe covers
  - Boot covers with ties
  - Safety glasses
  - Full face shield
- Body bags
  - Adult body bags-20MIL Extra Heavy Duty
  - Infant pouch
  - Pediatric pouch
- Toe tags
  - Paper toe tags
  - Plastic wrist/ankle tags
  - Aluminum toe tags
- Body bag marking/labeling
  - White or orange spray paint
  - Paper or aluminum tags
  - Silver or Gold art pan
- Evidence bags
  - Paper and or plastic evidence bags



- Evidence tape
- Bag marking instruments
- Biohazard waste disposal
  - 5 Gal. Biohazard bags
  - Bag ties
  - Biohazard waste labels
- Hand sanitizer
  - Liquid, foam or gel sanitizer in bottle
  - Sanitizing wipes
  - Sanitizing spray
- Office supplies/forms
  - Sharpie pens
  - General office supplies (pens, paper clips, rubber bands, etc.)
  - Printer/copier/scanner/fax machine
  - Copies of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH Mass Fatality Plan
  - Copies of all hospital human remains documentation
  - File storage

**NOTE:** *This is a suggested supply list. However, if the hospital has other supplies than those mentioned above for the purposes of mass fatality operations then they will be utilized.*

## 6.6 Universal Precautions

See each individual hospital/healthcare facility Standard Operating Procedures and Section 3.5 Morgue Safety of the Mass Fatality Plan.

## 6.7 Education and Training

Education, training and exercises must be conducted to make certain that all hospital/healthcare facility staff have a working knowledge of the State of Louisiana ESF-8 LDH plan and to guarantee that the plan is workable.

Each hospital/healthcare facility will be responsible for developing and keeping current all policies that will create communication and contacts list, a list of any necessary web resources, all flowcharts that will enable quick responses and staff education and training courses. These policies should include the mandates to keep these resources current.



## Sample Forms and Documents

- Attachment A: Mass Fatality Body Holding Area Log
- Attachment B: Mass Fatality Body Transfer Form



Mass Fatality Operational Response Plan

**Hospital and Healthcare: Attachment A**

**MASS FATALITY BODY HOLDING AREA LOG**

Hospital ID	Date Body Entered BHA	Received From	Received By	BHH Number (If Applicable)	Date Body Released From BHA	Received From	Received By



**Hospital and Healthcare: Attachment B**

**MASS FATALITY BODY TRANSFER FORM**

Name of Deceased: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Expired: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hour Clock)  
 Hospital No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Next of Kin: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Physician Pronouncing: \_\_\_\_\_ Preliminary Cause of Death: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Physician to Sign Death Certificate: \_\_\_\_\_  
 [INSERT AGENCY] Notified: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hour Clock) By: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Police Notified: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hour Clock) By: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mortuary Notified:\* Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hour Clock) By: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Mortuary Called: \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Notified: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \*Only with consent of [INSERT AGENCY]

**Coroner's Release**

The [INSERT LOCATION] Coroner's Office does hereby release the remains of the above named deceased.

By: \_\_\_\_\_ I.D. No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hour Clock)  
 Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

**Receipt for Remains**

RECEIVED FROM [INSERT EXPANSION 10]: the remains of the above named deceased

Released by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hour Clock)  
 Hospital Representative

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_  Coroner Autopsy Requested  
 Mortuary YES  NO

**Reportable Disease**

Disease Afflicted with reportable disease or condition? YES  NO  State Disease/Condition: \_\_\_\_\_

**Receipt for Valuables, Personal Practices and Laboratory Specimens**

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I HAVE RECEIVED CUSTODY OF THE FOLLOWING VALUABLES AND/OR PERSONAL BELONGINGS:

Items: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ (24 Hour Clock) Released by: \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_