



D25 FEMORS – The State of Florida’s Mass Fatality Response Team

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Attendees will learn how Florida developed a mass fatality response team to aid State Medical Examiners. This presentation will impact the forensic community by providing a working model to states interested in developing mass fatality response team.

Following the disasters of September 11, 2001, Florida’s Department of Health Emergency Operations Division initiated steps to create a mass fatality response team as a state asset to serve local needs, especially for non-federally declared disasters and to augment federal response resources. In concert with the University of Florida’s William R. Maples Center for Forensic Medicine, the Department of Health secured grant funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 1999 Bioterrorism Preparedness Grant for program development of the Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System (FEMORS).

FEMORS mission is to assist and support the local District Medical Examiner’s Office, Florida Department of Law Enforcement and other responding agencies, in the event of a mass fatality incident as directed by the Florida Department of Health.

FEMORS was inaugurated in July 2002 and initially tasked with establishing a web-site (www.FEMORS.org), recruiting forensic professional volunteers, and designing an initial training program which was conducted in March 2003. The scope of the program is designed to:

- Develop protocols and train teams of volunteer forensic professionals to assist Florida Medical Examiners during disasters.
- Develop a Mass Fatality Plan Annex to the State of Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, and
- Maintain a portable morgue for response to mass fatality disasters.

Protocols, annual training sessions including National Incident Management System, and the Mass Fatality Plan Annex were completed by the summer of 2005. Specialized training sessions for Odontology and Family Assistance Center operations have also been conducted. Procurement of portable morgue equipment (provided by a grant from the Office of Domestic Preparedness) began in the fall of 2005 to complete the program design.

Team members activated for disaster response become Department of Health temporary employees for compensation including coverage for worker’s compensation and liability. FEMORS was placed on stand-by for the four hurricanes of 2004 and was deployed during Hurricanes Charley and Ivan to provide assistance. In 2005, FEMORS was placed on stand-by for Hurricane Dennis.

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