



Workshops - 2017

W7 How to Manage the Multidisciplinary Response to a Mass Fatality Event

*Robert A. Jensen, BS**, Kenyon International Emergency Services, 612 Spring Hill Drive, Ste 180, Spring, TX 77386-6032; and *Anthony B. Falsetti, PhD**, Arizona State University, New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, 4701 W Thunderbird Road - Mail Code 2352, Glendale, AZ 85306

After attending this presentation, attendees will: (1) understand what to expect if they are involved in a mass fatality event; (2) understand who is involved; (3) understand what the expectations are of the different parties; (4) learn how to work with different government agencies, private parties, media, and families; (5) know how to provide leadership and direction; and, (6) understand the practical lessons learned from multiple events so they can review existing plans, update them if needed, and be better prepared for the variety of events in which they are likely to be involved.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing practical, experienced guidance on what to expect, how to manage, and how to avoid the very common mistakes that medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement, and others who have the responsibility of preparing for and responding to mass fatality events will face when these events occur.

Mass fatalities from terrorist attacks, natural disasters, industrial accidents, and transportation losses are complex events for the forensic community to manage. Complexities include the challenges created by fragmented, potentially contaminated human remains and the collection and preservation of evidence. Events which might include the tragic loss of 100 people could easily result in a recovery scene of several square miles and over 10,000 human remains fragments. They also include the involvement of multiple local, national, and international governments at the forensic, family assistance, and political levels, often with competing interests. These factors, combined with the massive logistical requirements and the overwhelming media and public attention, can create a chaotic situation for forensic practitioners who are more accustomed to controlled environments.

Today's forensic practitioners are expected to successfully manage these events. This includes medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement, and justice officials. The goal of this workshop is to provide the practical, overall view of mass fatality event management strategy. This eight-hour workshop will cover: (1) an overview of who's involved, from occurrence of the event to final litigation/court, as well as managing the best practice teamwork that is needed for success; (2) an overview of what's involved – the functional areas beyond the morgue that need to be addressed, such as collecting antemortem information, call centers to register missing persons, and family briefs; (3) media and communications management - how and what to say; secure websites; family, media, and political briefings; (4) common mistakes in identification and release of human remains; (5) dealing with HAZMAT (including deliberately introduced) or infectious (public health) contaminated human remains and scenes; and, (6) managing the critical incident stress impact on yourself and staff.

This workshop won't cover how to do an autopsy, or how to take and compare fingerprints, how to make an ID, or how to write a report. Rather, it teaches how to bring all areas of death investigations together in a cohesive and professional mass fatality response. Attendees will learn how to create a system to control all aspects of the response. This includes practical matters such as: quality assurance systems to manage the release of highly fragmented remains; how to develop checklists to help people who have not worked together; how to organize a morgue triage and process flow; and, how to manage and share the enormous amount of data that is both collected and requested by others.

Copyright 2017 by the AAFS. Unless stated otherwise, noncommercial *photocopying* of editorial published in this periodical is permitted by AAFS. Permission to reprint, publish, or otherwise reproduce such material in any form other than photocopying must be obtained by AAFS.



Workshops - 2017

Drawing on extensive, real-world, multi-event practical experience, participants will learn how to deal with the consequences of the event. No event is unpredictable and there are no new lessons, only new people learning lessons for their first time. This is an opportunity to learn and take the information back to your own organization to identify and fill in gaps in your own plans.

Mass Fatality Response, Multidisciplinary Approach, Mass Disasters