



Mass Fatalities Appendix

ESF-8 PUBLIC HEALTH & MEDICAL SERVICES ANNEX JOHNSON COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Coordinating Agency:	Johnson County Coroner
Support Agencies:	Johnson County Public Health Johnson County Med-Act Johnson County Mental Health Johnson County Sheriff's Office Funeral Homes Kansas Funeral Directors Association

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of *ESF-8 Public Health & Medical Services – Mass Fatalities* is to establish how mass fatalities response activities will be coordinated to meet the needs generated by disasters affecting Johnson County. The ultimate purpose in mass fatality response is to recover, identify and effect final disposition in a timely, safe, and respectful manner while reasonably accommodating religious, cultural, and societal expectations.

Scope

This annex identifies the key policies, concepts of operations, roles and responsibilities, and capabilities associated with responding to mass fatalities incidents in Johnson County. Specific operating procedures and protocols are addressed in documents maintained by the participating organizations. *ESF-8 Public Health & Medical Services – Mass Fatalities* applies to all individuals and organizations that may be involved in mass fatalities response activities in Johnson County.

SITUATION & ASSUMPTIONS

In addition to the “Situation and Assumptions” section in the Basic Plan and *ESF-8 Public Health & Medical Services*, the Concept of Operations for *ESF-8 Public Health & Medical Services – Mass Fatalities* is based on the following:

Situation

1. The Johnson County Coroner, who also functions as medical examiner, is ultimately responsible for the overall coordination of activities related to mass fatality incidents; however, there are many other organizations that are involved in the resolution of such events.
2. A mass fatality incident, by definition, is any situation where more deaths occur than can be handled by local coroner resources.
3. The Johnson County Hazards Analysis identifies a number of hazards that have the potential to cause a mass fatality incident in Johnson County.
4. A disaster resulting in mass fatalities would quickly overwhelm the resources of Johnson County.
5. Regardless of the size of the mass fatality incident, the Coroner is the legal authority to conduct victim identification (or augment the lead investigative agencies to complete victim identification), determine the cause and manner of death, manage death certification, and notification of next of kin.
6. The Kansas Funeral Directors Association (KDFDA) is available to assist local Coroners in Kansas as needed and requested.
7. The State Disaster Mortuary Response Team can be activated in accordance with the KFDA Mass Fatalities Disaster Plan.
8. Federal Disaster Mortuary Operations Teams (DMORTs) are available to provide guidance, technical assistance and personnel to recover, identify and process deceased victims. Federal DMORT teams consist of medical examiners, coroners, pathologists, anthropologists, medical records technicians, finger print technicians, forensic odontologists, x-ray technicians, funeral directors, mental health professionals and support personnel.
9. Commercial airline accidents require the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to conduct extensive investigations and to activate, if necessary, the "Federal Family Assistance Plan for Aviation Disasters." This plan requires the airlines to perform family notifications, and all aspects of victim and family logistical support.
10. Johnson County does not have a morgue but utilizes various regional morgues. Photographic and x-ray equipment is available at these morgues.
11. Med-Act has many body bags readily available and stores numerous others. Several hundred additional bags could be available through local vendors within 24 hours.

Assumptions

1. Most mass fatality incidents will require resources and assistance from regional, state, and federal partners.
2. Mass fatality incidents create widespread traumatic stress – for responders, families that are impacted, and at times, the community-at-large. Traumatic stress can lead to physical illness and disease, precipitate mental and psychological disorders, and can destroy relationships and families.
3. Under certain circumstances (e.g., commercial airline accident or terrorist act) select federal agencies will have critical on-scene responsibilities, thus requiring close and ongoing coordination with the Coroner's Office, local and state agencies.
4. In the event of pandemic influenza or similarly contagious disease, external resources may not be available and some services will need to be delivered differently to minimize the spread of disease.
5. Mass fatality incidents due to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear factors will present an added difficult dimension to the mass fatality response, recovery, identification, and final disposition of deceased victims.
6. In most instances, a mass fatality incident will generate state and federal disaster declarations and their inherent provisions and support.
7. A mass fatality incident may be the result of (or occur during) a disaster that has severely impacted critical infrastructure, systems, supplies, and or other essential services.
8. A mass fatality scene that is contaminated or extremely hazardous may prohibit the Coroner's Office from evaluating in a timely manner and may require additional assistance.
9. Contaminated deceased victims may require decontamination on-scene prior to admitting to a morgue.
10. The collection, inventory, and return of personal effects to the decedent's family are important.
11. The Coroner will find out about a mass fatality incident by being notified by a public safety official, various media outlets, and/or other emergency notification systems.
12. Family members will begin to come to the incident site almost immediately. A Family Assistance Center will need to be opened as soon as possible.

13. The expectations of family members, the general public, elected leaders and the media concerning identification of victims and morgue services will be high.
14. Most mass fatality incidents in Johnson County would necessitate establishing a temporary morgue.
15. A mass fatality incident will result in a surge in demand for death care industry services which may overwhelm the industry.
16. Because of the time involved in making positive identification of the victims, bodies may require appropriate storage for days or even weeks.
17. Activation of the Johnson County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will depend on the scope of the incident and the need for additional support.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. The Johnson County Coroner's Office will be notified of any mass fatality incident through the Johnson County Emergency Communications Center. Initial information to be relayed to the Coroner's Office includes:
 - a. Type of incident (aircraft crash, explosion, building collapse, etc.)
 - b. Location of the incident
 - c. Time of Occurrence
 - d. Status of the recovery of the survivors, if any (not yet begun, ongoing, completed)
 - e. The approximate number of dead
 - f. Known hazards to responders
 - g. If known, the location of the command post, identity of the Incident Commander and contact information
2. Incident site operations will be performed according to professional protocols to ensure accurate identification of human remains and, under certain circumstances (e.g., commercial airline accident and criminal or terrorist act), to preserve the scene and collect evidence.
3. The Coroner's Office will assess the scope of the event and anticipate levels of additional resources that might be needed. This could include:
 - a. Modification of routine workflow to permit processing and segregation of daily casework from disaster-related victims,
 - b. Possible supplemental space and equipment requirements for refrigerated storage,
 - c. Temporary staff and supply increases to respond to the surge event,

- d. Special processing complications such as protection from chemical exposure for responders and decontamination of recovered remains prior to transportation to morgue or temporary morgue site,
 - e. Supplemental or temporary morgue operations either in concert with the existing morgue facilities or at a remote location,
 - f. Victim Information Center (often referred to as the Family Assistance Center/FAC or for tracking missing person data) operations at a site removed from both the disaster site and morgue facility,
 - g. Records management and computer networking for managing data generated about missing persons and human remains to be processed and identified,
 - h. Alternate methods for final disposition in the event routine next-of-kin selection of funeral service providers is not available.
4. When disaster conditions appear likely to exceed the routine daily capabilities of the Johnson County Coroner's Office, the Coroner's Office will notify Johnson County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (or ESF-8 Public Health and Medical in the Johnson County Emergency Operations Center [EOC] when activated) for assistance. Upon their initial evaluation, the Coroner's Office will report assessment results to JCEMHS (or ESF-8 when activated) to specify:
- a. Estimated number of dead
 - b. Request for resources and/or assistance
 - c. Locations being established (Family Assistance Center [FAC], staging area, temporary morgue, etc.)
 - d. Any special safety issues that might impact responding personnel.
5. The Johnson County Coroner's Office is responsible for the following in a mass fatality incident:
- a. Establish and coordinate the activities of survey and recovery teams used to locate, catalog, and recover human remains and property.
 - b. Determine the need for and request additional or specialized resources, personnel, and equipment.
 - c. Establish, staff, and equip supplemental or temporary morgue operations either in concert with existing morgue facilities or at a remote location.
 - d. Coordinate with local law enforcement on the custody of remains and security of personal effects, to assure proper disposition.
 - e. Identify, in consultation with Med-Act's Hazardous Materials Medical Support Team, Johnson County Public Health, and/or HAZMAT teams, procedures for handling contaminated bodies and limiting further contamination.
 - f. Determine the need for forensic pathologists to provide technical expertise, depending on the nature of the incident.
 - g. Coordinate, working in conjunction with local law enforcement, the Sheriff's Crime Laboratory, forensic teams, the Family Assistance and others, the positive identification of victims.

- h. Coordinate the notification of next of kin with mental health professionals, the American Red Cross, and the Family Assistance Center.
 - i. Report pertinent information (number of fatalities, status of recovery efforts, etc.) on a continuing basis to ESF-8 in the County Emergency Operations Center.
- 6. It is the responsibility of the Johnson County Coroner's Office to ensure that appropriate types of and amounts of equipment and materials are readily available for use during at least the early stages of any mass disaster. It is understood that the scope of most mass fatality incidents will exceed the capabilities of the Coroner's Office.
- 7. During a mass fatality incident, the Coroner's Office will identify an appropriate facility as the Incident Morgue where victims are identified, cause of death is determined, property is identified and secured, and disposition decisions are made. The Incident Morgue may be established at an existing morgue or a temporary morgue established specifically for the incident.
- 8. A designated location for families to gather should be established as a Family Assistance Center in an area away from the scene.
- 9. A Federal Disaster Mortuary Response Team (DMORT) is comprised of multidisciplinary teams that provide technical assistance and personnel to recover, identify, and process human remains. As with the funeral directors, DMORT work under the guidance of the Johnson County Coroner. The DMORT can provide the following operational and logistical support:
- 10. The Mental Health Appendix to ESF-8 establishes how mental health response activities will be coordinated to meet the needs generated by a disaster in Johnson County.
- 11. Jurisdictional law enforcement (refer to ESF-13 Public Safety and Security) plays a significant role throughout a mass fatality incident. They are not just responsible for security concerns, such as secure perimeters (including incident location, temporary morgues, family care centers, and media briefing rooms) but also for notification to the Johnson County Coroner's Office of the mass fatalities event. Law enforcement personnel also perform investigation and assist in legal procedures in addition to the following:
 - a. Collect, secure, and return victims personal effects and belongings
 - b. Family support
 - c. Accompany victims' families to incident location if requested and feasible
 - d. Involve other officers in recovery and removal of human remains with the incident results in the death of law enforcement officers
 - e. Assist families in applying for crime victim compensation and other benefits if applicable.

12. All individuals/organizations involved in disaster response should collect and record information on the utilization of labor, materials, equipment, and disaster-related costs.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities for *ESF-8 Public Health & Medical – Mass Fatalities Appendix* are included in the *ESF-8 Public Health & Medical Services Annex*.

POLICIES, AUTHORITIES, AND REFERENCES

Please refer to the Basic Plan and the ESF-8 Annex for additional Policies, Authorities, and References.

Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996

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