



NATIONAL NEWS

DMORT **Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team**

WINTER 2007

EDITORS: SHEILA HALL AND TERRY SWANSON

WHERE IS DMORT IN DHHS?

*Submitted by
Dr. John Frasco, Region
VII Administrative Officer*

The question is often asked, “Now that we are with DHHS, where does DMORT fit in the big picture?”

The simple answer is that we are part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Office of Preparedness and Emergency Operations, National Disaster Medical System, Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams. For those of you who like the acronyms, the path is **DHHS/OASPR/OPEO/NDMS/DMORT**.

The more complete answer is that we are a contributor to the National Response Plan Emergency Support Function #8 – Public Health and Medical Services Annex. The Department of Health and Human Services is the

primary agency for the development and coordination of ESF #8 activities. DHHS works with support from the following departments, agencies, and organizations:

Department of Agriculture
Department of Justice
Department of Defense
Department of Labor
Department of Energy
Department of State
Department of Homeland Security
Department of Transportation
Department of Interior
Department of Veterans Affairs
Environmental Protection Agency
General Services Administration
US Agency for International Development
US Postal Service
American Red Cross

The National Response Plan, last updated on May 25, 2006, establishes a comprehensive all-hazards approach, enhancing the ability of the United States to manage domestic

incidents. The plan incorporates best practices and procedures from incident management disciplines — **Homeland Security, Emergency Management, Law Enforcement, Firefighting, Public Works, Public Health, Responder and Recovery Worker Health and Safety, Emergency Medical Services, and the private sector** — and integrates them into a unified structure. It forms the basis of how the Federal government coordinates with State, Local, and tribal governments, along with the private sector during incidents. It establishes protocols to help:

- Save lives and protect the health and safety of the public, responders, and recovery workers;
- Ensure security of the homeland;
- Prevent an imminent incident - including acts of terrorism from occurring;

- Protect and restore critical infrastructure and key resources;
- Conduct law enforcement investigations to resolve the incident, apprehend the perpetrators, and collect and preserve evidence for prosecution and/or attribution;
- Protect property and mitigate damages and impacts to individuals, communities, and the environment; and
- Facilitate recovery of individuals, families, businesses, governments, and the environment.

Our responsibilities in DMORT are within the National Response Plan.

Victim

Identification/Mortuary Services:

DHHS may request DHS (Department of Homeland Security) and DOD (Department of Defense) to assist in providing victim identification and mortuary services; establishing temporary morgue facilities; performing victim identification by fingerprint, forensic dental, and/or forensic pathology/anthropology methods; and processing, preparation, and disposition of remains.

(NOTE: This is one of the sections that is under review for the most

current revision that will align NDMS support functions within the Department of Health and Human Services)

To access the full text version of the National Response Plan with all Annexes go to:

<http://www.dhs.gov/> and Search 'National Response Plan'

Under 'Download the National Response Plan'

Select: [Full Version](#) (PDF, 426 pages, 4MB) including all annexes, "Emergency Support Function Annexes", "Support Annexes", and "Incident Annexes."

BURIAL OF THE UNKNOWN DEAD IN MISSISSIPPI

*Submitted by
O.J. Fawcett, Region V Member*

The following article originally appeared in the February 2007 issue of Region V's newsletter: "Voice of V"

I read the following letter in the "Readers' Forum" in the November 2006 issue of Mortuary Management. Perhaps other members of our Region V Team (as well as other regions) who were deployed to Katrina East would like to know of the final disposition of the two unidentified victims of Katrina.

I have obtained permission to rewrite this letter from Mortuary Management as well as from Mr. Harvey.

In his email, Mr. Harvey commended the efforts of the DMORT Team. He also mentioned that he helped out the Bradford O'Keefe Funeral home for two weeks after Katrina doing embalming, removals, etc. He said that it was tough doing the work under only the light of one 60-watt bulb, as that was all they had when the generator ran the embalming machine. They even did some embalming by the old gravity method and no aspiration, as there was no water pressure.

On a hot summer afternoon in Gulfport, Mississippi, students of the Funeral Service Technology Program at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, along with myself, attended the burial of the final two unidentified victims of Hurricane Katrina in Harrison County Mississippi. According to County Coroner Gary Hargrove, no one had ever identified or claimed these two bodies. The service was very nice and was attended by approximately 150 people including the media and clergy. A sole bagpiper played "Amazing Grace" as the caskets were transported from the hearses to the biers. Clergy of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths provided prayers. The victims were interred at Evergreen Cemetery in Gulfport close to the graves of the three unidentified female victims

of Hurricane Camille in 1969. The burial took place on August 29, 2006 - exactly one year after the hurricane came ashore on the Mississippi coast. Services were provided by Harrison County, Harrison County Coroner's Office, Bradford O'Keefe Funeral Home, Gulf Coast Funeral Home, Hartwell Christian Mortuary, J. T. Hall Funeral Home, Lockett-Williams Mortuary, Marshall Funeral Home, and Riemann Funeral Home.

Bill Harvey, Director
Funeral Service Technology
Mississippi Gulf Coast
Community College
Perkinston, Mississippi

**REGION III ANNUAL
TRAINING
GETTYSBURG,
PENNSYLVANIA
March 23-25, 2007**

Region III will be holding its annual training session in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on March 23-25.

Dental team members will attend forensic dental training, featuring a didactic session that focuses on digital dental x-ray technique and technology, followed by hands-on workshops at both ante-mortem and post-mortem stations.

The main focus of this year's training will involve an explosion disaster scenario with multiple fatalities. Accompanying lectures will address the nature of explosives and explosive devices, as well as the forensic pathology of explosion injuries.

The PA-2 DMAT's (NDMS Specialty Crush Injury Team) will join DMORT III as medical providers in the scenario. Training will also include discussions on ethical and communication issues encountered during disasters, as well as self-care during an incident.

The training session will commence on Friday evening (March 23) in Gettysburg with DMORT III's selection of traditional activities: a "pub crawl" into historic Gettysburg, a black-tie dinner, and an "old movies and popcorn" gathering. All DMORT team members are welcome. If you are not a DMORT III member and wish to attend, please contact DMORT III Training Officer - Patrick Murray, DDS - at pmurraydds@aol.com.

**DMORT REGION VII
UPDATED WEBSITE**

The DMORT Region VII Command Staff would like to announce the introduction of their new regional website at www.dmort7.org.

Much gratitude is owed to the past and current Web Masters for their time and expertise:

Mary Phillips, Dane Johnson, and Dr. James McGivney. The entire Region VII Leadership Team was also instrumental in providing their input for this endeavor.

Bill Young (Region VII Commander), the entire Region VII Leadership Team, and the Web Masters invite DMORT team members to review their website and contact them with any

suggestions or comments. Their contact information is currently available on the website.

**DMORT REGION VIII
UPDATED WEBSITE**

DMORT team members are welcome to visit Region VIII's updated website at www.dmort8.org. Any comments or suggestions can be sent to **Carl S. Higbee** (webmaster) at csh@dmort8.org.



*Congratulations to **Mike Nathe** of Bismarck, ND who was chosen as Region VIII's Distinguished Member of the Year.*

REGION IX NEWS

Barbara Salazar (Administrative Officer) reports that DMORT Region IX has been internally focusing on their **Command and General Staff** development. The strategy has been to decentralize the team management and develop team members who can manage activities at the lower levels. A second Deputy Commander was promoted; the Training Officer vacancy was filled; an additional Administrative Officer joined the Leadership Team to focus on recruitment; two Planning Officers were added; four new Search & Recovery Site Supervisors

were appointed; a Logistics Coordinator/Officer was named; and a Communications Officer position was staffed. The Search & Recovery Supervisor positions will be the primary Squad and Strike Team Leaders and the first-line supervisors for Team members, when deployed or in training status.

This reorganization allows the **Primary Command Staff** (Commander, Deputy(s), Administrative Officer, and Training Officer) to focus on Strategic Issues and the day-to-day integration and coordination of Headquarters level initiatives. These include the DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) transition, Budget, National Conference coordination, and overall coordination with our Regional Emergency Coordinator(s) and with other teams in the NDMS System. The **General Staff** will focus on specific Tactical and Task Activities which will include: Personnel Accountability, Search & Recovery, Logistics, Communications, Morgue Operations, and overall Forensics and Mortuary Operations.

The staff changes are:
Rocky Shaw - Deputy Commander for Operations
Bruce Anderson, Randy Emon, Laura Fulginiti and Rod Walters - Search & Recovery Supervisors
Melinda Latta - Roberts - AO/Recruitment
Anna "Ski" Cahill - Logistics Officer
Ron Foster - Communications Officer
Michael Ilescu - Training Officer

John Linstrom (Commander) said, "I am very proud of the caliber of personnel that has chosen to serve on our team. This new leadership team is an example of the world-class professionals that we have in the NDMS System. I am thrilled to serve alongside some of America's best and brightest forensic professionals. Their dedication and decision to serve in leadership is evidence of their continued sacrifice for their region and for their country."

DMORT WMD **THE EVOLUTION OF A TEAM**

Submitted by
Steve Tinder, DMORT WMD Deputy Commander

DMORT is a proven group of professionals from all walks of life who respond to any Mass Fatality Incident in order to provide assistance during a tragic situation.

Nearly ten years ago, **Mr. Jack Beall** (Chief, NDMS Section), observing the need for a very specialized DMORT team, outlined a concept - one that would be responsible for decontaminating recovered human remains from Mass Fatality Incidents. Having such a team would ensure that all remains were decontaminated, and the potential for hazardous exposure in the DMORT incident morgue, as well as to DMORT personnel, would be greatly reduced.

Directed by DMORT Region IV Team Commander - **Dale Downey** - the DMORT NBC (Nuclear, Biological,

Chemical) Team was created and initially staffed by DMORT Region IV team members. As the DMORT NBC Team slowly developed, new members were selected from the other nine DMORT teams across the nation.

As the scope of operation expanded, more specialized personnel were recruited. The team was renamed DMORT WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction). Today, the team has over 80 members and will continue to grow until it is sufficiently staffed to manage decontamination operations 24 hours a day/seven days a week for a major WMD incident.

The team's original training consisted of decontaminating manikins. The need for the team to develop and implement effective protocols in a realistic environment, using human remains, became obvious. For several years, plans were discussed to accomplish this specific type of training. The University of Tennessee (UT) Department of Forensic Anthropology and the UT Forensic Facility (better known to all as the "Body Farm") in Knoxville, Tennessee was the only group and location in which this type of training could be developed.

Plans were drafted, and agreements were signed between NDMS/DMORT WMD and the University of Tennessee, allowing DMORT WMD personnel to work with donated human remains for training purposes. This enabled DMORT WMD to effectively decontaminate actual cadavers and body parts. The project expanded

rapidly to include the University of Tennessee Medical/Trauma Center, the East Tennessee Regional Forensic Center, and the City of Knoxville – specifically, the Knoxville Fire Department’s Training Center.

In May 2005, the first such training was held in Knoxville, drawing special guests from all over the United States and from as far away as England and Australia, to observe how DMORT WMD works in processing contaminated human remains. The team noted the four-day training as being the best and most productive of any previous sessions. Plans were immediately started for the next training in 2006.

In September 2006, the expanded DMORT WMD Team returned to Knoxville for an even more realistic training with human remains. In an effort to make the training simulate a real world deployment, the idea of involving Regional DMORT team members and members of the three NMRT’s (National Medical Response Team) was devised. DMORT WMD was honored that members from DMORT Regions III, V, VIII, X, NMRT-E (North Carolina), NMRT-C (Denver), NMRT-W (Los Angeles), and members of the United States Marines Decontamination Group, CBERF, were able to participate in the training. There were also several NDMS representatives present to observe the exercise.

All guests were suited in PPE (Protective Personal Equipment) and took a hands-on part in the training. This training simulation was extremely realistic, involving everyone in attendance. This training was the first time that the newly developed Recovery Section of DMORT WMD exercised their skills in recovering human remains from some complex areas at the Knoxville Fire Training Center.

This second DMORT WMD Team training received a 100 percent positive response from not only the team members, but also the guests from other teams.

Arrangements are currently underway, in preparation for the third such training in Knoxville - September 2007 - with new challenges for the DMORT WMD Team, along with a new group of members from other teams.

DMORT WMD trainings are always open to all regional DMORT team members. We feel it is vital for every DMORT team to have the knowledge and understanding of how DMORT WMD operates, since we are all part of the DMORT system. We all need to work together, in order to accomplish our ultimate goal of returning loved ones back to their families.

Every DMORT Commander will be contacted during the next several months, with an invitation to send one or more representatives from their team to the September 2007 DMORT WMD training in Knoxville. We

look forward to seeing many of you later this year!



Dr. William Bass, internationally known forensic anthropologist and author, lecturers to members of the DMORT WMD Team and other visitors during the September 2006 training in Knoxville



DMORT WMD personnel secure a body for removal from an attic structure



DMORT WMD personnel remove the body through a window by lowering it to awaiting team members on the ground



DMORT WMD decon technicians use a sprayer to apply a decontamination solution to the body

**2007 NDMS ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
NASHVILLE,
TENNESSEE**

**Gaylord Opryland Resort
and Convention Center
March 17-21, 2007**

For those still interested in attending the 2007 NDMS Conference in Nashville, the link is:
<http://ndms.chepinc.org>.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the conference, you may email CHEP at events@chepinc.org or call 410-642-1857.

**DMORT NATIONAL
NEWS**

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**DMORT ITEMS FOR
SALE**

Dr. Jim Adams, our DMART proprietor, will be at the upcoming NDMS Conference in Nashville, Tennessee - March 16-19, with many of the DMORT-logo merchandise for sale. Some items will be represented by samples, which can be ordered and shipped directly to your home.

For on-line orders, please contact Jim at Jim@dmort.org.