



DMORT NATIONAL NEWS

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

FALL 2008

EDITORS:
TERRY SWANSON
MARY FISCHER
SHEILA HALL



DC DEPLOYMENT 2008

A Personal Narrative

By Brad Targhetta, DMORT Region V Deputy Commander

In early September, I was contacted by HHS in Washington DC and requested to come to Headquarters to assist in coordinating the deployment of DMAT, NVRT and DMORT teams during Hurricanes Hanna, Ike and eventually Gustav. My deployment was from September 4, 2008 through October 4, 2008. I did have a short time at home as I flew home Sept 17th, flew to Chicago on the 18th, provided an hour presentation to a group on the 19th and flew home only to leave again for DC on the 20th.

Upon arrival I was welcomed into the HHS Operations Center (OPS) by **Jerry Rodgers** and **Kim Newcomer**, people I had previously met during the Hurricane Katrina deployments 3 years ago. Also present were **Dawn Sager** and **Bob McAfee**. Dawn is Mark Russo's Secretary and Bob is an intermittent worker. I later met **Brian Schreengost**, **Allen Propke** and **Ray Sanchez**, who were working nights at OPS.

The OPS staff co-operates with many different agencies just as we do in DMORT. They receive calls from many outside agencies, fielding requests from all teams.

Before my arrival, the OPS staff was tasked with deployment of all assets requested for Hurricanes Hanna & Ike. They had three people on staff at the time of deployment requests. This meant those three people answered the phones, reviewed and vetted rosters

(checking if members had their Federal Credit Card, ID, and current licenses), and also printed and e-mailed deployment orders for all requested teams. They accomplished this in a time frame of 2-3 hours.

I was introduced to the procedures of dealing with phones, vetting of rosters, and printing and e-mailing deployment orders as required for teams to deploy.

It was not long before the need for more help was filled by **Melissa Moeckel** and **Andrea McNary** (2 DMORT-WMD AO's) and our great **Sue Atwood** (Region V AO). **Cindy Mathews** (Region VI AO) and **John Frasco** (Region VII AO) were also deployed and worked on vouchers and travel payments.

My time evolved from the regular 12 hour shift to 13-14 hour shifts each day. Once things slowed, we were able to stay at the 12 hour shift. I began on the day shift, moved to nights, back to days and finally back to nights again.

Working at Headquarters is always a learning experience. I did enjoy my time spent in DC. I only hope I/we never experience the need to go again.



Sue Atwood (Region V AO), Barbara Salazar (Region IX AO), and Brad Targhetta (Region V Deputy Commander) in Washington, DC

DEPLOYMENT 2008: Post-Hurricane Ike

A Personal Narrative

By David Hunt, DMORT Region V Deputy Commander

I was deployed on Sunday, September 28th, and arrived in Lake Charles, Louisiana later that evening. The next day, we worked in the morgue, which was set up in a building next to Burton Coliseum: it wasn't ideal, but the advantage was that it had plenty of airflow!

We processed several unidentified caskets on Monday. On Tuesday, we removed several remains from caskets that were identified, but breached. Many were Hurricane Rita caskets with the metal tags, from the last mission. Wednesday was a fairly short day for several of the forensic people, since there was only one new unidentified casket to process. We also received our first shipment of new caskets. We unloaded 25 caskets and recasketed 19 remains from Texas in about 45 minutes. It was a very impressive team effort. The DMATs even jumped in and helped. The remains were sent back the next morning.

Later in the day on Wednesday, there was a moment when a small child's casket had been found and was obviously breached. She had died only a few weeks before the hurricane and had an ID tag on the casket. Another worker and I were suited up, so we opened the casket and moved her to a clean bag to await a new casket. As we were removing her personal effects, I noticed that the rest of the people in the morgue had come to a complete stop, as we took care of this child. It certainly reflects the professionalism and respect that makes up all of DMORT.

On Thursday, we casketed the rest of the Louisiana remains, and the mission came to an end. The mission turned out to be fairly small.

There are still missing caskets, but recovery was not a part of our mission this time. When the morgue had operations, it ran very well and efficiently. I had the opportunity to work with several former DMORT Region V members, including **Shannon Dotson**, **Mike Gedert**, **Bubba Stevens**, **Jim Weldy**, and **Ed Babcock** (his first deployment).

I want to thank all of the DMORT Region V team members for their response to the call downs and willingness to serve. The call coordinators worked hard to keep our list up-to-date, and we had one of the largest groups on alert.



Jim Weldy (DPMU) and Ed Babcock (DPMU)



Mike Henderson (Region VII Deputy Commander) and Dave Hunt (Region V Deputy Commander)



Lunch time on deployment

ENGRAVING

By Mike Gedert

DPMU Deputy Commander

An engraving machine was added to the DMORT DPMU cache during the Hurricane Katrina/Rita mission. Some of you may have worked with either this machine or the engraved tags that it produced. If so, you should know that your work was not in vain. The tags that were produced and subsequently attached to caskets before reburial saved many hours of work and tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Of the disinterred caskets found in Louisiana after Ike, nearly 75% of them were the same caskets that had been disinterred after Katrina/Rita, AND HAD THOSE TAGS ATTACHED! Those caskets were able to be re-interred without needing to go through processing in the morgue. What a huge relief that was for the families and the responders.

The tags are two inches in diameter and are made of stainless steel. They are attached to the caskets with heavy duty zip ties. One side of the tag had the hurricane name and year of occurrence. The other side had an assigned number or a name of the individual if it was known.

Placing those tags on the caskets may have seemed like an insignificant job at the time; however, it made a huge impact during the response to Hurricane Ike. What a great investment of both time and money it was to utilize this engraving machine and the tagging process.



An engraving tag used during the aftermath of Hurricane Ike



Bob "Bubba" Stevens (DPMU) and Dean Stacy (DPMU) work on tags for the caskets from Hurricane Ike

TRAINING UPDATES

ICS COURSES

FEMA has updated a few of their courses. The IS 100 course is now IS 100A and the IS 200 course is IS 200A. If you have previously taken the IS 100 and 200 courses, you do **not** need to take these updated courses. Please remember you are required to have completed either version of these courses along with IS 700 and IS 800B (or IS 800) before January 1, 2009 to remain eligible for deployment.

NDMS has added the IS 300 and 400 to the list of mandatory courses for all members. These are **not** available on the Internet and are a two-day program for each class. Members should begin looking for these courses within your state. Most states offer these courses at no cost.

The following comments relate to questions from the October TO Conference Call concerning 300 and 400 courses:

- 1. Question:** Will 300 and 400 be a requirement and how do we do it since it is a “classroom style” course, not web-based?
Answer: Yes, it is a requirement. Originally these were to be completed by 1/09 for all DMATs. But we recognize not all will complete these courses by that date. It is recommended to make them a priority. Some of you can get it through your work place, others can possibly get help from your team budget, fire departments in some states are offering it, and it might be offered at the Summit 2009.
- 2. Question:** Are all DMAT members going to be required to complete 300 and 400?
Answer: Yes. That is correct, all members.
- 3. Question:** Is that all teams or just DMATs that must complete the 300 and 400?
Answer: Yes, all teams. The push now is 100, 200, 700 and 800 (a and b as appropriate).

More information will be forthcoming as it becomes available.

REGION V NEWS

DMORT REGION V LEADERSHIP TEAM ATTENDS CENTER FOR DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS

By Jan Simons

DMORT Region V Training Officer



The DMORT Region V leadership team recently completed the ICS 300 and 400 courses at the **Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP)**, located in Anniston, Alabama. The team arrived in Anniston the day before and departed the day following the training. All transportation, lodging, and food expenses were covered by the CDP with federal funds.

To receive these funds, as they are not available to federal entities, the team received individual approval through their respective states as local emergency responders.

The courses spanned a four day period with the focus on ICS 300 the first two days and ICS 400 the final two days. The instructors were well prepared and easily applied appropriate scenarios to the course material to assist in the learning process. These courses combined instruction and breakout sessions for students to apply the concepts learned.

The CDP provides federally-funded, interdisciplinary training for emergency responders from across the United States and U.S. Territories, for ten responder disciplines: Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Service, Fire Service, Governmental Administrative, Hazardous Materials, Healthcare, Law Enforcement, Public Health, Public Safety Communications, and Public Works.

Additional information about CDP training programs can be found at <http://cdp.dhs.gov>.

You can also contact your regional registration coordinator:

Western Region Coordinator
Mr. Chris Caputo
1-866-213-9548
caputoc@cdpemail.dhs.gov

Central Region Coordinator
Mr. Grant Bissey
1-866-213-9547
bisseyg@cdpemail.dhs.gov

Eastern Region Coordinator
Mr. Tom Tidwell
1-866-213-9546
tidwellt@cdpemail.dhs.gov



Region V Leadership Team at the Center for Domestic Preparedness

REGION VII NEWS

Nine members from the DMORT VII team were deployed to assist in the Victim Identification Center established at Lake Charles, Louisiana in late September and early October, 2008. The deployment was ordered as an augmentation for DMORT VI members who were scheduled to demobilize. The following members were deployed: **Alan Anson, Melissa Connor, Kevin Davis, Mary Dudley, John Frasco, Mike Henderson, Ken Hermsen, Mike Phillips and Eric Wilson.**



Team photo taken on site - October 2, 2008

.Congratulations



*Michael L. Phillips
DMORT VII Deputy Commander*

Congratulations to newly appointed Deputy Team Commander **Michael L. Phillips** from Vinton, Iowa. Mike accepted his new responsibilities this summer and is a welcome addition to the DMORT VII Command Staff.



Nadine McNeal
DMORT VII Deputy Administrative Officer

Kudos to **Nadine McNeal** from Shellsburg, Iowa - who was appointed to the position of Deputy Administrative Officer. Nadine accepted her responsibilities at the NDMS Training Summit in Nashville, Tennessee. Nadine is one of the few people who can keep our Administrative Officer, **John Frasco** from straying too far off target.



Sue Travis
DMORT VII Safety Officer

A new position appointment was also granted for **Sue Travis**, also from Shellsburg, Iowa as one of the DMORT VII Safety Officers. Sue brings a wealth of talent in safety matters to the team with many years of experience in her private sector employment.

REGION X NEWS



Frank Sebastian has been promoted to "acting" Commander of DMORT Region X, after **Duane Bigoni** stepped down for health issues. Frank is the president of a private investigation firm that specializes in death investigation. For several years, he worked for the Pierce County Medical Examiner's Office in Tacoma, WA. He is also the chief

organizer for the air show portion of Seattle's SeaFair. He has been a team Deputy Commander since 2006 and has shown his value at several deployments - where he has organized chaotic situations in every position assigned. Congratulations Frank!

DMORT WMD NEWS

Steve Tinder

WMD Deputy Commander of Administration

After what has been a long dry spell of not being able to add new members to our DMORT WMD Team, it appears we will be welcoming several new members in the near future. We recently got the “green light” to begin building our team with a number of qualified people to improve our response capabilities.

Recently, we received a list of six applicants who had reached the stage of becoming a team member, when all applications were halted late in 2006 as NDMS prepared for the transfer from FEMA to Department of Health and Human Services. These six individuals have been waiting almost three years since first applying to join our team and all of them still expressed an interest in becoming a part of DMORT WMD.

We were very fortunate to have gotten five of them through the fingerprinting and security processes before the September deadline. We now look forward to adding them to our team roster. The one person who was unable to continue in the process had new job demands which made it impossible for him to meet the requirements we ask of new team members.

The new team members include: a male registered nurse from Michigan – adding to our efficient medical staff, a retired law enforcement person from North Carolina, two fire fighters/hazmat specialists/EMTs - both from Illinois, and an emergency management agency director with an extensive background in fire service and mortuary operations.

In addition to these five new members, we are fortunate to be able to transfer three current NDMS team members from their current teams to DMORT WMD.

The first transfer is an airline flight operations manager from California with a background as a hazmat technician, EMT, fire science graduate and P.O.S.T. certified police officer. The second transfer is a mental health specialist from Kansas. The final transfer is an emergency response and planning coordinator, who also has background as a firefighter/paramedic, hazmat technician and safety officer.

It is obvious that we are lucky to be adding some very talented people to DMORT WMD, and we look forward to making them a part of our family in the near future.

DMORT WMD TRAINING
Rock Hill, South Carolina
January 22-25, 2009

The DMORT WMD Team will be training for the first time in over a year when the group meets at the Fred O. Berry Jr. Training Center in Rock Hill, South Carolina. The training will be held from Thursday, January 22 through Sunday, January 25, 2009, and will allow team members to be updated on their required certifications for dealing with hazardous materials. Since the last full team training was in September, 2007, in Knoxville, TN, all team members are looking forward to spending time sharpening their training skills and preparing for the time when DMORT WMD may be needed.

The training in Knoxville last year allowed DMORT WMD Team members to work with cadavers and other human remains in the most realistic exercise that could be created. Also, members from the three National Medical Response Teams (NMRT) and several regional DMORT team members attended that training and took part in the hands-on exercise.

The upcoming training in January will concentrate primarily on classroom work with team members also doing a full setup of all equipment.

Regional DMORT team member are always welcome to attend a DMORT WMD Team training. If interested, please contact one of the team's command or administrative officers for additional information.

IMMUNIZATION UPDATES

H.H.S. has done some revisions of our immunization requirements, and is very serious in wanting us all protected.

Annual Flu Shot

Annual TB Skin Test (if the test reveals a false positive, a medical signature that we are asymptomatic is required.)

Every 7 years: Tetanus Shot

We should all have our immunization records up to date for polio, hepatitis series, MMR, etc.

Be sure to send copies of your immunization card to the person in charge in your region once the annual immunizations are completed.

Stay prepared. Keep your go bag ready and be sure your medications are up to date and not expired.

IN MEMORY

By Duane Bigoni

DMORT has lost one of our great resources in early October to a sudden, unexpected death. **Don Phillips** has been a member of DMORT for only seven years, but in that time had been deployed several times to both the traditional type deployments, as well as those "weird, how do we handle this" situations. He had also assisted with training opportunities. Don was initially a member with Region X, but when the stand-alone Family Assistance Team was organized, he was chosen as one of the few to utilize his greatest talent - to directly help the grieving family. Don was just 51 years old and leaves behind his wife, June. He had worked for the Clark County (Vancouver, WA) Medical Examiner's Office for the past eighteen years, after starting his career as a funeral director. Don made friends everywhere he went and somehow made the toughest situation seem pleasant. He is already greatly missed.

2009 INTEGRATED MEDICAL, PUBLIC HEALTH, PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TRAINING SUMMIT

The 2009 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit is scheduled **April 4-8 in Dallas, TX**. The website link is:
<http://www.hhstrainingsummit.org/>

The Program Development team is working toward recording these sessions and making them electronically available to all members via the Internet.

DMORT NATIONAL NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Terry Swanson terryswanson@msn.com
Mary Fischer mffischer53@hotmail.com
Sheila Hall halls@infantwelfare.org

