

HAMILTON COUNTY INDIANA



MASS FATALITIES PLAN

Hamilton County Mass Fatalities Plan

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this annex is to describe and identify roles and procedures in mitigation, preparedness, response to and recovery from mass fatality incidents. This annex provides for proper coordination of mass fatality incident response activities, and establishes means and methods for the sensitive, respectful, orderly care and handling of human remains in multi-death disaster situations.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

1. Hamilton County is vulnerable to tornadoes, floods, winter weather, hazardous materials incidents, mass transportation accidents, river accidents, and acts of terrorism. Any of these occurrences could result in multiple death response requirements that would overwhelm local capabilities.
2. Should local capabilities be exceeded, support will be available from neighboring counties, state agencies and federal agencies.

B. Assumptions

1. Hamilton County and its political subdivisions have capabilities including manpower, equipment, supplies and skills of public and private agencies and organizations that will maximize preservation of lives and property in the event of an emergency.
2. When disaster conditions permit and an estimate can be made of the deceased, temporary morgue sites will be established; remains will be covered and evacuated to the temporary morgues for identification purposes and safeguarding personal effects found on the deceased. When authorized by officials and the family, the Hamilton County Coroner shall prepare, process and release the remains for final disposition.
3. Hamilton County will fully commit their resources before requesting assistance from the State.
4. State assistance will be requested when response requirements exceed the County capabilities.

III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. All public safety agencies in Hamilton County use the National Incident Management System (NIMS) when managing a disaster.
2. Mass fatalities incident response is separate from and secondary to search and rescue operations. Response activities should occur only after all survivors of the incident are moved to safety.

3. The primary concerns of a mass fatality incident response are recovery, identification of human remains and assistance to affected families.
4. Mass fatality incidents involve many tasks and can become very complex. Teamwork and appreciation of the roles of other agencies are crucial during planning and during the incident itself.
5. Responsibility for collection, identification, storage and dispatch of deceased victims lies with the Hamilton County Coroner as set forth by law in the State of Indiana.

B. Phases of Emergency Management

1. Mitigation

- a. Pre-designation of temporary morgue sites.
- b. Pre-designation of refrigerated trucks.
- c. Development of mutual aid agreements.
- d. Specialized training and education.

2. Preparedness

- a. Planning, training and exercising
- b. Updating and revising plans

3. Response

- a. Identification of staging areas
- b. Coordination for transportation of equipment and personnel
- c. Provisions for family reception area
- d. Public information activities
- e. Search and body recovery
- f. Body identification
- g. Logistical support

4. Recovery

- a. Continuation of response activities as needed

- b. Compilation of reports and records.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Organization

The Mass Fatalities function is the responsibility of the Hamilton County Coroner. The Coroner has the overall authority. The Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency will provide coordination for activities and resources.

B. Assignment of Responsibilities

1. Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency

- a. Coordinate response and recovery activities to include mass feeding, public information activities and transportation support.
- b. Secure additional resources through State and Federal agencies as needed.
- c. Coordinate training in mass fatalities incident response.
- d. Coordinate and conduct exercises in mass fatalities response.

2. Hamilton County Coroner

- a. Recovery and evacuation of remains.
- b. Body identification.
- c. Disposition of human remains.
- d. Preservation or embalming.
- e. Notification of next of kin or representative.
- f. Documentation on each victim
- g. Prepare and file death certificates.
- h. Resource listing
- i. Safeguarding of personal effects.
- j. Identification of morgue site
- k. Establishment of staging area

3. Hamilton County Sheriff's Department Chaplaincy

- a. Grief counseling
- b. Assist American Red Cross with family assistance.
- c. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- d. Assist County Coroner with notification of next of kin or representative.
- e. Assist American Red Cross with planning memorial services if needed.

4. Mortuary Services

- a. Transport decedents from temporary morgue sites to designated facilities.
- b. Activate Indiana Funeral Home Directors Association Emergency Response Plan.

5. Law Enforcement

- a. Provide perimeter control and scene security of incident site, temporary morgue sites, American Red Cross Family Assistance Center, and hospitals.
- b. Escort of refrigerated trucks from incident scene to morgue site.
- c. Assist in activities to document, reconstruct, and investigate the incident.
- d. Support search and recovery activities.
- e. Provide assistance to support management of human remains.
- f. Assist County Coroner with notification of next of kin or representative.

6. Public Health/Medical

- a. Conduct epidemiological surveillance and disease control activities.
- b. Provide medical care for incident casualties and first responders as needed.
- c. Provide support for decontamination as needed at their respective facilities.
- d. Send representatives to and coordinate special resource requests through the Emergency Operations Center.
- e. Hold decedents until the Municipality can arrange transportation to a morgue.

7. American Red Cross

- a. In coordination with the Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency and the affected Commercial Carrier, as it applies, the American Red Cross will establish a Family Assistance Center (FAC) at a local hotel in order to provide for the affected family members safety and security. Within the FAC the American Red Cross will provide assistance in the following areas:
 - i. Registration & Identification (If needed)
 - ii. Mental Health Support
 - iii. Physical Health Support
 - iv. Childcare as needed
 - v. Spiritual Care Support
 - vi. Mass Care support as needed
- b. The American Red Cross will additionally support the response effect on the whole with feeding needs to all response groups involved as requested by the Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency.

8. Fire Departments/Emergency Medical Services

- a. Provide aid to viable patients including rescue, triage, treatment, and transportation.
- a. Provide assistance to support management of human remains.
- b. Conduct onsite decontamination of decedents, survivors, and first responders if necessary.
- c. Support search and recovery activities.
- d. Coordinate medical rehab for first responders.

9. Indiana Department of Homeland Security

- a. Provide body bags upon request by the Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency.
- b. Provide any additional resources and/or support requested by the Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency.

V. DIRECTION AND CONTROL

The Hamilton County Coroner is responsible by law for the collection, identification, storage and dispatch of the deceased. The Coroner can request assistance from other county agencies through the Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency.

VI. CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT

Each department, agency and commission of county, city, town and townships are responsible to have a continuity plan:

1. Designating lines of succession.
2. Delegating authority for the successors.
3. Establishing provisions for the preservation of records.
4. Developing procedures for the relocation of essential departments.
5. Developing procedures to deploy essential personnel, equipment and supplies.
6. Establishing the guidelines to develop Standard Operating Procedures for all agencies to ensure succession and continuity of government.

Each county agency and each local jurisdiction will include this information in its Standard Operating Procedures, guide or plan.

VII. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

The Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency and other county agencies will provide administrative and logistical support, as specified in the Hamilton County Comprehensive Emergency Management Agency.

VII. PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The Hamilton County Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the development, review and maintenance of this annex with the assistance of responsible agencies.

IX. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

This Plan was developed, promulgated, and is maintained pursuant to the following state and federal statutes and regulations, along with local policies and authorities generated between local support agencies:

1. 42 United States Code (USC) 5121 et seq, referred to as the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.
2. 42 United States Code 11001 et seq, Emergency Planning Community Right-to-Know Act. Public Law 99-499 Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act of 1986, Title III.
3. Code of Federal Regulations Title 44, Part 205 and 205.16.
4. Indiana Code Title 10-14-3, Civil Defense and Disaster Law of 1975.

5. Indiana Code Title 10-14-5, Emergency Management Assistance Compact.
6. Hamilton County ordinance 10-14 and other local ordinances pertaining to emergency management.